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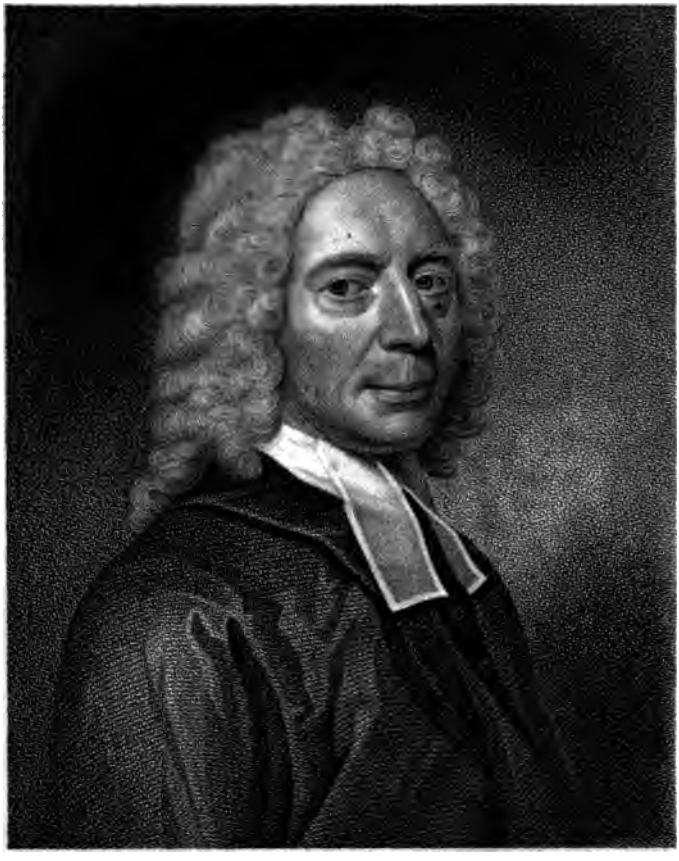

ISAAC WATTS, D.D.

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THE

WORKS

OF

THE REV. ISAAC WATTS, D. D.

IN

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VOL. I.

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MEMOIRS

OF

DOCTOR WATTS.

IT was a custom among the ancient Romans, to preserve in wax, the figures of those among their ancestors, who were of noble birth; or had been *more* nobly advanced to the chair of honour by their personal merits. Sallust relates "that Scipio and other great men, by beholding these likenesses, found enkindled in *their* breasts, so ardent a thirst after virtue, as could not be extinguished, till, by the glory of their *own actions*, they had equalled the illustrious objects of their emulation. But it is the happiness of *Christians* to possess truer notions of virtue, and to be governed by infinitely higher views. We may, however, hence observe the force of example, which is peculiarly operative in those who sincerely love God. They no sooner reflect on the accounts given of such as have been eminent for their piety and zeal, than they become desirous of imbibing the same spirit*.

The advantages to be derived from theological biography, are too various to be enumerated; and of such obvious importance, as to supersede all studied encomiums. The sacred scriptures abound with relations of extraordinary occurrences in the lives of men, who were distinguished in their day by their virtues or their crimes: And, as if the Holy Spirit designed to provide for our entertainment, and to gratify our curiosity; there is not a beauty in this species of historical writing, of which we have not some interesting example, in the inspired volume.

Each character is drawn by the hand of impartiality and faithfulness; so that we are in no danger of being deceived by the influence of any of those passions, which so often degrade other relations of the same kind. While compassion tempers the hatred of sin, the love of truth corrects the ardor of *private* gratitude, the usual partiality of friendship, and the zeal of opinion. Here no excellence, which evidences them to be the Sons of God, is exalted above its intrinsic value; nor is any failing, common to them as the children of Adam, concealed or extenuated.

Next to these divine records, our esteem is claimed by the many valuable literary monuments which have been raised in all succeeding ages, by the labours of piety and veneration, to the remembrance of those eminent names, whom the unerring Judge of *true* excellence *has delighted to honour*.

The lives of men who have made themselves famous in the cabinet, or in the field, may instruct and animate survivors of the same profession: the intrigues of courts, the elevation and the fall of a statesman, the manœuvres of generalship, the decision of a battle, are attended to with a lively avidity by

* Reynolds.

the sanguine politician: But if characters and events in themselves little (if at all) adapted to the great purposes of intellectual and moral improvement, can create such an interest in the worldly mind, with what superior delight and advantage may the subjects of the wisdom that is from above review the lives of those who (whatever inauspicious circumstances may have attached to their origin, or to their condition in life) have exemplified the beauties of unaffected devotion, and shewn the way to true, to substantial happiness, and immortal honour! "Such a man, although the meanest mechanic, who employs his best affections upon the Author of his life and salvation, who loves the good, compassionates the distressed, and breathes peace and good-will to all; who abhors vice, and pities the vicious, who subdues and triumphs over the unruly passions of his fallen nature; such a man (however low his outward condition) is the best patriot, and has more just pretensions to heroism, than he who makes the most glaring figure in the eye of an injudicious world. He is like one of the fixed stars, which through the *remoteness* of its situation, may be thought very inconsiderable and obscure by unskilful beholders, yet is as truly great and glorious in itself, as those luminaries which, by being placed more commodiously for our view, shine with more distinguished lustre*."

The christian will here see the excellence of genuine religion, in its influence upon the mind and conduct through every department of life. In the most afflicted state of the Saviour's empire, he will find some bright examples of decision, unshaken confidence, and undaunted zeal. His faith in the doctrines of the gospel will be confirmed by observing the god-like tempers, and the various lineaments of the divine character produced by the sovereign virtues of those doctrines. In such memoirs, he will learn more perfectly to distinguish between the realities and the shadows of devotion; and to decide more satisfactorily on the state of religion in his own mind; and while tracing the mysterious operations of providence, in advancing the servants of God to prosperity and happiness, by trivial and improbable means, new sources of admiration and pleasure will continually open to his view. Here in the time of difficulty, he may obtain well adapted directions for his conduct; he may meet with salutary caution amidst the allurements of worldly enjoyment; and in the prospect of suffering or dying, he may so far enter into the spirit of the characters he contemplates, as more effectually to secure the dignity of his own.

From the memorials of distinguishsd men, the student, who is seriously engaged in the pursuit of knowledge, will renew his strength, to surmount the hinderances incident to his labours, while he follows them, whose admirable *natural* abilities have been cultivated to the highest attainable state of perfection, or whose persevering application to the means of improvement has brought to light hidden powers of genius; who were insensible to the baits of pleasure, the contagious example of indolence and vice, and the most discouraging difficulties; who were superior to the obstinate prejudices which often persecute a low origin, the disadvantages of indigence, a sickly constitution, natural impediments, and whatever a supine and grovelling mind would pronounce insuperable. While he keeps such a character in sight, he will assume fresh courage in struggling to useful eminence; and every day his success will be less dubious. The plans they adopted, the various helps of which they availed themselves in their progress, their uniform perseverance, their acqui

* Seed.

sitions and the application they made of them to the service of the church and of civil society, cannot fail to administer instruction. Every candidate for the work of the sanctuary, who feels as he ought the importance of his designation, and who, having finished his preparatory obligations, will owe much of his best assistance to the light reflected upon him from these luminaries.

Some, if not all, of these advantages, will be obtained from the life of Dr. Watts; if perused with such dispositions, as gave that life all its lustre. What is said of another eminent man, will with equal truth apply to him: As anatomy discovers all the curious contexture of our bodily fabric, so here are vivid representations of faith, love, and an heavenly mind; of humility, meekness, self-denial, entire resignation to the will of God, in their first and continued motions; with whatever parts and principles besides, compose the whole frame of the new creature. Here it is as if we could perceive with our eyes, how the blood circulates in an human body through all the veins and arteries; how the heart beats, the animal spirits fly to and fro, and how each nerve, tendon, fibre, and muscle, performs its several operations. Here it may be seen, how an heart touched from above, works and tends thitherward: how it depresses itself in humiliation, dilates itself in love, exalts itself in praise, submits itself under chastisement, and how it draws in its refreshments and succours as there is need. To many who have seen so amiable a course of life, how grateful will it be to behold the secret motions of those inward latent principles, from whence all proceed! Though others would look no further than the advantages (in external respects) that accrue from it. So some content themselves, to know by a clock the hour of the day, or partake the beneficial use of some rarer engine; the more curious, especially any that design imitation, and to compose something of the same kind, would be much more gratified, if through some pellucid enclosure, they could behold all the inward work, and observe how every wheel, spring, or movement, perform their several parts and offices, towards that common use*.

But to him whose *only* object is entertainment, the subsequent Memoirs will afford but little gratification. Extraordinary incidents, and curious anecdotes, are not to be expected in the life of a man, whose excursions were bounded by a few miles in the neighbourhood of the metropolis; who had formed no domestic relations; whose bodily afflictions, often and for long seasons, incapacitated him for every duty, and for every pleasure, but such as were purely intellectual and spiritual; and who, when in health, perhaps rather shunned social intercourse, as incompatible with his literary pursuits and his ministerial obligations. But whoever is capable of appreciating the importance of learning and philosophy, when sanctified by an ardent zeal for the glory of God, by gentleness, humility, and unremitted exertions for the best interests of the world; or whoever possesses the noble ambition of attaining such eminence in wisdom, piety, and usefulness, and of imbibing any degree of that elevation of mind, so conspicuous in this great man, may anticipate more substantial rarities, the zest of which he will never lose, while he needs the aid of instruction, or the animating influence of an example so full of grace and beauty.

Isaac Watts, the eldest of nine children, was born July 17, 1674, at Southampton. If his family connections did not possess the advantages of affluence, they were such as might have secured him against the prejudice

* Howe.

usually attached to a low origin, by the pride of fashionable life. But had he descended (as was reported) from a poor mechanic, had his parents lived in the utmost meanness, his name would be pronounced with reverence; his character and writings would be held in the same esteem and admiration by all who are capable of making a just estimate of what is truly valuable in the existence of man. As princely grandeur can never dignify ignorance and vice, so talents, learning, and piety, are not to be degraded by any reverse. His father presided over a boarding-school, at Southampton; of good reputation. He was a man of lively devotion, and a decided non-conformist. But living under a reign, the profligacy of which, gave the stamp of fashion to almost every vice; a reign, the bigotry of which, fixed the odium of fanaticism, hypocrisy, and sedition, upon every avowal of attachment to the pure religion of the cross, he became a considerable sufferer, driven by the persecuting emissaries of the prince of darkness, from the comforts of domestic life, and the enjoyment of his religious privileges, he was doomed to the degradation and hardships of a jail. During his confinement, his wife would often sit on a stone at the door of the prison, with this child of promise at her breast, revolving in deep affliction of mind, the horrors of that tyranny by which they were deprived of their chief earthly protection, and left alone to contend with the buffetings of adversity.

In the morning of life, he gave the most promising indications of a bright and useful day: Before he had well learned to speak, a book was his greatest pleasure, and every little present of money, received additional value in his esteem, as it applied to the gratification of this early propensity. When a child he began to act the part of maturer years, in attention to mental improvement, and in preparation for the service and enjoyment of God. The true principles of wisdom and spiritual understanding, which thus early began to bud, yielded, through every succeeding period of his earthly pilgrimage, a rich variety of fruit, pleasant to the sight, and good for food. Although naturally of a temper remarkable for vivacity, he was a singular exception to the vanity of childhood and youth. The hours devoted by other children to play, he employed in reading, or in composing little poems to gratify the fond expectations of his mother.

In his *fourteenth* year, he entered upon the studies of the learned languages, under the tuition of Mr. Pinhorn, a minister of the established church, and master of the free grammer-school at Southampton; a man of considerable reputation for learning and respectability of character. Here our young student discovered such avidity of application, and extent of capacity, and so distinguished himself by the ease and celerity of his progress, that all who knew him, anticipated with delight, the perfection he afterwards attained. His whole deportment in this critical period of age, formed a happy contrast with the prevailing spirit of some modern fashionable seminaries, where the seeds of vice find a congenial soil, and often before the age of manhood, produce a copious harvest of personal and relative evils. To prepare himself for usefulness in the world, to secure the approbation of heaven, realize the hopes of his friends, and to reward the labours of his preceptor, by his continual diligence in improving the advantages he enjoyed; in these points was all his ambition concentrated. In the twentieth year of his age, he inscribed a latin ode to Mr. Pinhorn, which is not more honourable, as a tribute of gratitude to the merit of the master, than as a proof of uncommon proficiency in the scholar.

His unremitted diligence, and rapid progress at the grammar school, were so conspicuous as to draw upon him the attention of some considerable characters in the town and neighbourhood, engaged by the promising appearances which he made of future celebrity in learning and religion: And with a view to his adoption into the established church, they proposed to support him at one of our English universities. But having studied the principles of nonconformity, on which the sufferings of his father had probably given him some useful lessons; and being satisfied that these principles were most congenial with a kingdom not of this world, he respectfully declined the flattering proposal, and declared his resolution to take his lot with the dissenters.

Thus when youthful vanity and ambition are generally most alive to the allurements of emolument and elevation, he sacrificed the fairest prospects of earthly possessions in order to unite himself with a people, branded with every opprobrious epithet; a people with whom, in place of the ease, riches, and honours of clerical preferment, he must substitute labour for the salvation of souls, and estimate his gains only by his success.

The date of his spiritual life cannot be ascertained, but the fact was indubitable from a very early period: Surely the consideration, that such a christian as Dr. Watts, could make no reference to the particular circumstances of time, place, or means, connected with his first spiritual affections, ought to check the presumption of those, who would limit the operations of grace, to the contracted sphere of their own pre-conceptions. He who condescended to lay aside the scholar and the philosopher, to direct the hosannas of our children, and to provide systems of instruction adapted to their wants and capacities, was himself discriminated in his early childhood, by hatred of evil and love to the ways of God.

When only seven or eight years old, he composed some verses to gratify the wishes of his mother; which, for clear views of scriptural truth, and fervour of devotion, would have done honour to far more advanced age. The natural vivacity of his youth was corrected and improved by a deep sense of religion; convinced that no life can be pleasing to God, that is not useful to man, he sanctified his best days, by a lively and well-tempered zeal to do good. He sought and enjoyed communion with God, in retirement from the world; and displayed, in his uniform deportment, the inseparable connexion subsisting between strict religion and substantial pleasure. In the depth of his humility, in the elevation of his affection, he was superior to most of his cotemporaries. Before he attained his twenty-second year, he had composed the greater part of his hymns; in comparison with which, most compositions of the same kind are frigid and lifeless. They may indeed in some instances, be thought too appropriating and extatic for our mixed assemblies, and for the general state of our religious joys: but such objections only confess the sublimity of his devotions, and faithfully applied to the disparity of our resemblance, will excite every sentiment of humility. As he advanced from his childhood in his intimacy with heaven, and in his rapid attainments of that knowledge, which too commonly inflates the mind with pride, he was still further removed from the consciousness of his superiority; and in proportion as he grew in favour with God, his meek and lowly temper rendered him daily a greater favourite with man.

Decided in his views and experience of the doctrines of the gospel, the

discipline of the church, and in the choice of his religious connexions, he repaired to an academy in London, in the year 1690, where he prosecuted his studies under Mr. Thomas Rowe, at that time pastor of the independent church-meeting, at Haberdasher's-Hall. Three years afterward this church had the honour of receiving him as a member. At the academy Mr. Hughes, the poet, Dr. Hort, afterwards archbishop of Tuam, and Mr. Say (the successor of Mr. Ed. Calamy) were his fellow-students; and, as appears by their subsequent correspondence, they entertained a warm friendship for him. Here he appears to have laboured with incessant perseverance; not merely to pass with credit through the routine of academical obligations, but to attain to eminent distinction in the soundest qualifications for future usefulness. Very few, by a much longer course of study, make any near approach to the extent of his acquirements. In diligence he had no equal; in his attainments, he had no competitor; and as his progress in the paths of learning was not dishonoured by an ostentatious vanity, he won the esteem and admiration of all who were connected with him in preparatory studies.

From the first general incorporation of the dissenting interest, by the rigid persecutions of the hierarchy after the restoration of Charles II. the body of non-conformists have always deemed it an important object, to provide a succession of ministers competently qualified with divine and human knowledge. Deprived of the splendid advantages of Oxford and Cambridge, they have endeavoured, and with no inconsiderable success, to supply the necessities of their churches, by seminaries of a more private and humble kind. In every dissenting academy, founded on evangelical principles, satisfactory evidence is always required, that the candidates for admission have experienced the power of religion upon their hearts, that they have suitable dispositions for the reception of knowledge, and that they are possessed of qualifications adapted to the service of the church. During their academical residence, vigilant attention is paid to maintaining inviolate the honours of practical godliness; and that residence would, in any instance, be terminated by an act of immoral or scandalous conduct. In the whole course of study, supreme homage is paid to the WORD OF GOD; and languages and sciences are pursued with a constant reference to the increase of divine wisdom, and general usefulness. When these advantages are duly considered, dissenters have good reason to be thankfully reconciled to their exclusion from the noble endowments, the magnificent libraries, and the splendid honours of those universities. One of the best scholars and ablest writers Oxford has produced, has made the following candid remarks on this subject:

"I believe it to have been a very happy circumstance for Mr. Secker*, that he was educated in a dissenting accademy, and under so good a tutor. I attribute much of his future eminence to this circumstance, as well as to the connection he fortunately formed there, that purity, that dignity, that decency of character, which enabled him to fill the great offices of the church with singular weight and efficacy. Educated in a dissenting persuasion, and under dissenting tutors, he had paid less attention to polite letters, and more to divinity, than is usually bestowed by students in the universities. Young men in Oxford and Cambridge, frequently arrive at an age for orders, and be-

* Afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury.

some successful candidates for them, who have studied scarcely any other divinity, than such as is to be found in Ovid's Metamorphosis, and Tooke's Pantheon. Few regularly-bred divines, as they are termed, apply themselves to divinity at so early an age; and, indeed, through the defect of a knowledge, and of a taste for it, in youth, many, after obtaining orders, still continue to study, if they study at all, the theology of Athens and Rome. But the dissenters study divinity at an early age, and if they had united the study of the belles lettres with it in due proportion, I believe their divines would have made a still more honourable appearance than they have done, though they are, and ever have been, highly respectable‡."

What Mr. Watts was as a *student*, the testimony of his tutor sufficiently evinces: He never, Mr. Rowe declared, gave him any occasion for reproof; but was so exemplary, that he often proposed him as a pattern for the imitation of other pupils. The great ends of his studies were fixed, and the subjects of them were substantial, he well knew the value of his opportunities, nor was he at any loss as to the best means of improving them. No time was given to vain amusements, or to unnecessary indulgencies. The seasons of rest and exercise (so essential to health) were curtailed, and so passionately was he devoted to the increase of his knowledge, that he either laid the foundation of disorders, which imbittered his future life, or, if latent, armed them with the power which resisted all medical skill. The operations of his own mind, his reading, his observation, and his social intercourse were all made subservient to the great designs of his station. With the hands of a Midas, he had the art of turning whatever he touched into gold: the treasures of knowledge, both philosophical and theological, opened to the world, so early after he left the academy, shew the intenséness of his application, and the capaciousness of his mind during his residence there. The most important works in every science engaged his attention; and as he had no tedious hours to amuse, nor any fugitive curiosity to gratify, his reading uniformly promoted the increase of his mental riches. He did not rove about in the fields of science to gather withering flowers, but the precious fruits *wherewith the mower filleth his hand, and he that bindeth sheaves his bosom.* To impress upon his memory the most important and interesting parts of the books he read, it was his custom, to make judicious abridgements; and that he might compose and digest the sentiments and arguments of his authors, in order to render each in succession instrumental to the confirmation and enlargement of his views, his principal books were interleaved.

The long silence of this excellent and accomplished youth, after he left the academy, as to the primary object of all his studies, the preaching of the gospel, affords considerable scope for conjecture: He was twenty years old when he returned from London to Southampton; there he remained two years; after which he went to reside in the family of Sir John Hortopp, as tutor to his son, where he continued two years longer.

It is true he was but still a youth diffident of himself and deeply affected with the importance of the ministry, under a sense of his insufficiency and trembling lest he should go to the altar of God uncalled. But after sixteen years spent in classical studies, after uncommon proficiency in other parts of learning connected with the work of the ministry, with every qualification

‡ Knox.

for the sacred office, living at a time when his public services were peculiarly needed and when he was known and spoken of as promising celebrity in whatever profession he might chuse, that with all these advantages he should continue in retirement, is a fact difficult to account for; and for which only his extreme diffidence can afford any apology.

But whatever were his reasons for so long a silence, his time was wisely improved; he gave himself up to reading, meditation, and prayer; and in the family of his patron, besides discharging the duties of a tutor, he was employed in several of his most useful and popular works, particularly his Logic, Astronomy and Geography.

In the family of Sir John, he appears to have enjoyed, whatever was most congenial with his views in friendship and devotion: his testimony in his sermon on the death of Sir John is highly honourable to his virtue and to the mingled respect, sorrow and gratitude of the preacher.

While he was increasing his mental treasures by study, and familiarising the importance of these treasures to his pupil, he enjoyed opportunities of conversing with the wise, the learned, and the devout, here his thirst after knowledge increased daily and his ambition for usefulness. The advantages of his situation, like the beams of light, fell upon an object capable of reflecting them; and to this part of his life, may be ascribed much of that superiority, by which he was afterwards distinguished in the church; which still animates us in his writings, and which amidst all the caprice of taste, or the revolutions of opinions, will endear and perpetuate his remembrance.

On his birth-day 1698, he preached his first sermon; "Probably considering *that* as the day of a *second* nativity, by which he entered into a new period of existence." Sometime in the course of this year he was chosen assistant to Dr. Isaac Chauncy, pastor of the Independant church then meeting in Mark-lane, and such was his acceptance and success, that in January 1701—2, he succeeded Dr. Chauncy in the pastoral office. The day on which he accepted his invitation to this charge was distinguished by an event peculiarly interesting to the friends of religious liberty. The death of King William III. brought a cloud over the prospects of the dissenters; which in the close of the succeeding reign, was ready to burst in showers of calamity, and which was only dispelled, by the critical interposition of divine providence in the death of queen Anne.

Mr. Watts, who had not entered upon the service of God without duly counting the cost, was not to be discouraged by difficulties, nor deterred by opposition. He had "engaged in a sacred work, where the harvest is great, and the labourers are but few; while he had left the field of ambition, where the labourers are many, and the harvest not worth carrying away."* His views were directed to right objects, his principles invigorated his exertions, and the power with which he was endowed from on high, enabled him to speak with irresistible wisdom. The same month in which he assented to the unanimous call of the church, he was solemnly set apart to the important relationship; and never did any young man assume the pastoral office with higher qualifications, with deeper humility, or with more ardent desires for the eternal welfare of men. His public declaration of acquiescence in the choice of

* Goldsmith.

the church (of which some abstracts are here subjoined) while it illustrates the truth of these observations, will gratify every reader of spiritual discernment.

"Brethren,

"You know the constant aversion I have had to any proposals of a pastoral office for these three years. You know also, that since you have given me an unanimous call thereto, I have proposed several methods for your settlement without me, but your choice and your affections seemed to be still unmoved. I have objected my own indisposition of body, and I have pointed to three divines, members of this church, whose gifts might render them more proper for instruction, and their age for government. These things I have urged till I have provoked you to sorrow and tears, and till I myself have been almost ashamed. But your perseverance in your choice, your constant profession of edification by my ministry, the great probability you shew me of building up this famous and decayed church of Christ, and your prevailing fears of its dissolution, if I refuse, have given me ground to believe, that the voice of this church is the voice of Christ; and to answer this call, I have not consulted with flesh and blood: I have laid aside the thoughts of myself to serve the interest of our Lord. I give up my own ease for your spiritual profit and your increase. I submit my inclinations to my duty, and in hopes of being made an instrument to build up this ancient church, I return this solemn answer to your call, that, with a great sense of my own inability in mind and body to discharge the duties of so sacred an office, I do, in the strength of Christ, venture upon it, and in his name I accept your call, promising in the presence of God and his saints, my utmost diligence in all the duties of a pastor, so far as God shall enlighten and strengthen me; and I leave this promise in the hands of Christ our Mediator, to see it performed by me unto you, through the assistance of his grace and Spirit."

These professions and promises were followed by corresponding diligence and holy zeal. The number and variety of his writings, the frequency and excellence of his preaching, his exact attention to the spiritual affairs of his flock by domestic visits, when not confined by illness, shew the intenseness of his industry, and a laborious piety, as uncommon to others as they were honourable to himself. The younger members of his church were peculiarly interested in his affection and zeal. For them he was always forming plans of religious improvement, and when he could no longer be useful to them in the pulpit, he was solicitous for them in his afflicting confinement. To promote their prosperity and happiness in the momentous concerns of a future world, he formed a society from this class of his charge, for prayer and spiritual conference. In this society the substance of his Guide to Prayer was originally delivered.

In visiting the families of his congregation, he was always careful to leave a savour of divine truth upon their minds; and as his own piety was cheerful, he endeavoured to diffuse its benign influences wherever he went: Walking or riding, in company or in retirement, he was either improving himself or others. He was never so much at home as in his study, nor ever more in his element than when engaged in performing the works of mercy and the labours of love.

His tempers were such as became his character, and secured to him the veneration and esteem of those who most materially differed from him in points

of faith. To say he had his imperfections is only to assert, that he was a man and not an angel. If his natural tempers were hasty, and he occasionally expressed himself with a keenness bordering on resentment, he was habitually meek and lowly.

With a mind eminently susceptible of the emotions of friendship and gratitude, he was superior to the contracted views, and the untempered zeal of the bigot. "It was not only in his book but in his mind that orthodoxy was united with charity." He knew how to sustain injurious treatment without retaliating. His meekness of opposition was remarkable, and the good he performed was unclouded by pharisaical ostentation. His popularity was duly tempered by his low opinion of himself; and his afflictions were sanctified by patient submission to the unerring will of heaven. The love of money in a minister of Christ, he looked on with contempt and detestation. A third part of his income he devoted to the purposes of charity, and when he was incapable of his public labours he refused to receive his salary. "Happy will be that reader whose mind is disposed, by his writings, to copy his benevolence to man and his reverence to God.

In company he assumed no superiority, nor could any wise and good man feel his superiority with other sentiments than such as were mutually honourable. His conversation betrayed none of the weakness of egotism, nor the malevolence of detraction. He could be entertaining without levity, and serious without austerity. With a natural easy flow of thought he combined aptness, purity, and elegance of expression; so affable and engaging was his deportment wherever he went, that the enquiring virtuous mind was always gratified, while the gay and thoughtless were fixed in attentive veneration, and so conspicuously were the beauties of sincerity delineated in his social character that he was not more admired as a man of talents and learning, than he was sought, loved and trusted as a faithful friend.

As a preacher, Dr. Watts ranks with the most eminent: His published sermons afford a happy specimen of the spirit which pervaded his pulpit exercises. Here is no trimming, no disguise of sentiment, all is transparent and clear as crystal. He thought with the humility that becomes a fallible man, but he spoke with all the perspicuity, decision, and boldness, of an honest man. What is said of Mr. Philip Henry is not less applicable to him. He was admired and loved, because, though so excellent a scholar and so polite an orator, he became so profitable and powerful a preacher, and so readily laid aside the enticing words of man's wisdom, which were so easy to him. While he avoided whatsoever could disgust the learned and polite he was equally cautious not to soar above the illiterate. In his sermons dignity and simplicity are so conspicuous that every one sees he only wished to gain access to the passions through the medium of the understanding. Sometimes he thought he descended too low in accommodating his style to ignorance and dulness of apprehension. In his discourse on Humility, represented in the character of St. Paul, he makes this apology for descending to familiar and low scenes of life. "I almost reprove myself here, and suspect my friends will reprove me too for introducing such low scenes of life, and such trivial occurrences into a grave discourse. I have put the matter into the balances as well as I can, and weighed the case, and the result is this: General and distant declamations seldom strike the conscience with such conviction as particular representations do; and since this iniquity often betrays itself in these trivial instances, it is

better perhaps to set them forth in their full and proper light, than that the guilty should never feel a reproof, who, by the very nature of their distemper, are unwilling to see or learn their own folly, unless it is set in a glaring view*.

But as his great aim was to be understood, and to supply his hearers with suitable matter for holy meditation in private; as he watched for souls like one that was to give an account, a divine solemnity accompanied all he said. The frivolous, jocular disposition of some modern pulpit orators, never degraded his character, never insulted the decency of public worship, or mocked the expectations of the devout mind. Where is the expression that could raise the faintest blush upon the cheek of modesty, or irritate the risibility of the most puerile?

In his personal appearance there was little that could interest the admirers of external comeliness. He was low of stature, and his bodily presence was weak; yet there was a certain dignity in his countenance, and such piercing expression in his eyes, as commanded attention and awe. His manner was animated; but not boisterous; the self-possession he enjoyed was inspired by confidence in God; and therefore, discovered nothing but respect and affection for his hearers. When Dr. Gibbons asked him, if he did not find himself sometimes too much awed by his auditory, he replied, That when such a gentleman, of eminent abilities and learning, has come into the assembly, and taken his eye, he felt something like a momentary tremor, but that he recovered himself by remembering what God said to the Prophet Jeremiah, "Be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them." In preparation for his ministry, he wrote and committed to memory, the leading features of his cursory sermons; the rest he trusted to his extemporary powers, and the promised assistance of the Holy Spirit; and he never failed to acquit himself with credit. "His reading had made him a full man, conference a ready man, writing an exact man‡," and his free access to the fulness of Christ made him an essentially profitable man. At the conclusion of weighty sentences it was his custom to pause, that he might quicken the attention and more solemnly impress the realities of the gospel upon the mind. He had cultivated with care and singular success the graces of language. The correctness of his pronunciation, the elegance of his diction, and the grandeur of his sentiments, obtained him an uncommon share of popularity. I once mentioned, says Dr. Johnson, the reputation which Mr. Foster had gained by his proper delivery to my friend Mr. Hawkesworth, who told me, that in the art of pronunciation he was far inferior to Dr. Watts.

His ambition of usefulness was confined to no time or place; such was his love to the Head of the church, and his compassion for the fallen children of men, that he was eager to seize every opportunity of glorifying him, and administering the word of salvation to them, as the subsequent anecdote, communicated by Mr. Kingsbury, of Southampton, to Dr. Gibbons, will testify:—"Mr. Richard Ellcock was a servant in old Mr. Watts's family. Dr. Watts going to London after the last time of his visiting his father at Southampton, Richard Ellcock was ordered to go with him a day's journey. The Doctor entered into serious discourse with him, which made a deep and lasting impression on his heart and was the means of his sound and saving conversion.

* Discourses on Humility. ‡ Bacon.

After the Doctor came to London, he wrote to his father, recommending the servant to his particular regard, for that he doubted not he would make an eminent christian, and so he lived and died, leaving an honourable character for piety and uprightness behind him."

Soon after he had entered upon his pastoral labours, he was visited with illness, which threatened all the sanguine hopes of his people with an early period to his usefulness. His confinement was long, his recovery slow, and his constitution considerably impaired. Under these circumstances, the Rev. Samuel Price was chosen to assist him in the duties of his office. However, his exertions were renewed with his strength, and his sufferings enabled him to preach more than ever to the instruction and delight of his hearers. In the prosecution of his various plans of usefulness, he met with no material interruption till September, 1712, when he was seized with a fever of such violence, that it brought a debility upon his nerves, for which time afforded no remedy, and which entirely laid him aside from the exercise of his ministry more than four years. How inscrutable are the dispensations of providence, when men who, for disseminating the doctrines of the cross, possess the first qualifications, are laid aside or cut off in the flower of their age, while others, far below mediocrity, live till they become useless and burdensome!

Of the affectionate solicitude of his people for the restoration of his health he was honoured with the best evidence by their unceasing prayers to God for him in this season of trouble. Particular days were set apart for this purpose, in which many of his brethren in the ministry united as men deeply impressed with the importance of his life; and their prayers were answered. Mr. Price, his assistant, was now, at Mr. Watts's own desire, elected to be joint pastor with him; and he was accordingly ordained to this office, March 3, 1713. Between these two fellow-labourers there subsisted, till death, an inviolable friendship. The amiable subject of our memoirs speaks of Mr. Price as his faithful friend and companion in the ministry; and mentions a legacy that he leaves him, "as only a small testimony of his great affection for him, on account of his services of love during the many harmonious years of their fellowship in the work of the gospel." When the preachers of religion, whether they sustain such immediate relationship or not, thus live superior to the meanness and guilt of depreciating and envying each others reputation, talents, and services in the church; when the despicable spirit of competition, and variance, of cold civility, and jealousy is absorbed in brotherly love, and in generous exertions for the just honour of each other, then they will furnish an effectual confutation to the ignorant clamours of infidelity against priest-craft, and as was the case with these two excellent men, the friendship they exercise will return seven-fold into their own bosoms.

The afflicting state to which Mr. Watts was reduced by this sickness, inspired his friends with a tender and becoming sympathy, and particularly engaged the benevolent attention of Sir Thos. Abney, at that time an alderman of London, and afterwards one of its representatives in parliament: A man of eminent piety and zeal, a blessing to his country and the church of God. He died in the year 1722, deeply regretted by all the friends who were contemporary with him and acquainted with his worth, and no less respectfully remembered wherever the works of Dr. Watts are read, by the monuments of his friendship for the author; a friendship pure and uniform, without the usual pride of patronage, or the obsequiousness of timid submis-

tion. In this family he found an asylum from the anxieties of dependance, and that still more endeared by the perception of reciprocal benefits. Here he experienced all the tenderness and care that the languishing state of his health required.

Whatever riches and munificence could supply, or respect and affection suggest to alleviate these painful vicissitudes, he enjoyed to the full extent of his wishes, and to the happy event of his introduction into this benevolent family may be ascribed the prolongation of a life the value of which may be estimated by the many excellent works which he published, during his long residence with them. The same respect and friendship shewn him by Sir Thomas Abney were perpetuated by his lady and their daughter till his days were numbered and finished. Lady Abney died about a year after him. She was endowed with every virtue essential to an illustrious example.

The following anecdote, communicated to the late Mr. Toplady by the Countess of Huntingdon, will serve to confirm what is said of the happy terms upon which he lived with this house. The Countess being on a visit to Dr. Watts at Stoke-Newington, was thus accosted by him: Your ladyship is come to see me, on a very remarkable day. "Why is this day so remarkable?" answered the Countess. "This very day thirty years," replied the Doctor, "I came to the house of my good friend Sir Thomas Abney, intending to spend but a single week under his friendly roof: and I have extended my visit to the length of thirty years:" Lady Abney who was present, immediately said, Sir what you term a long thirty years visit I consider as the shortest visit my family ever received. His gratitude, in the review of his obligations during a thirty-six years residence with her ladyship, is strongly marked in a passage of his will, where he speaks of the generous and tender care shewn him by her ladyship and her family in his long illness, many years ago when he was capable of no service, and also her eminent friendship and goodness during his continuance in the family ever since.

The various stories circulated of his strange nervous affections, or rather it should be said, of his intellectual derangement, appear to have been the fabrications of the designing, and only to have obtained belief with the credulous. "I take upon me, and feel myself happy," says his biographer and friend, Dr. Gibbons, "to aver, that these reports were utterly false, and I do this from my own knowledge of him for several years, and some of them the years of his decay; from the express declaration of his amanuensis, who was ever with him, and above all from that of Mrs. Elizabeth Abney, who lived in the same family with him thirty-six years."

But his constitution was broken, and his nervous system considerably disordered and debilitated, by the frequent and heavy strokes of illness, and his intense exertions of mind, especially in his youth*. He was for several

* What he says in one of his sermons shews to what the corporeal afflictions of his later days may be ascribed: Midnight studies are prejudicial to nature, and painful experience calls me to repent of the faults of my younger years, and there are many before me have had the same call to repentance. Wearing out the lightsome hours in sleep is an unnatural waste of sunbeams. There is no light so friendly to animal nature as that of the sun. Serm. xx.

years together greatly distressed with insomnia, or continued wakefulness. Very often he could obtain no sleep for several nights successively except such as was forced by medical preparations; and not unfrequently even opiates lost their virtue, and only served to aggravate his malady. It is wonderful how, with such a weak frame and so many shocks rapidly succeeding each other, he was able to maintain such equanimity of temper, and vigour of intellect: The state of his mind through all the decays of nature, his humble confidence and his joy gave the decisive stamp of reality to his hopes and exemplified the sublime attainments of which we are capable in this vale of imperfection and sorrow. His superiority to the pressures of sickness, and his triumphant assurance of the love of God are beautifully expressed in his own devout soliloquy which he entitles Thoughts and Meditations in a long sickness, 1712,—1713.

Yet, gracious God, amidst these storms of nature,
Thine eyes behold a sweet and sacred calm
Reign through the realms of conscience. All within
Lies peaceful, all compos'd. 'Tis wondrous grace
Keeps off thy terrors from this humble bosom.
Though stain'd with sins and follies, yet serene
In penitential peace, and chearful hope,
Sprinkled and guarded with atoning blood.
Thy vital smiles, amidst this desolation,
Like heav'nly sun-beams hid behind the clouds,
Break out in happy moments, with bright radiance
Cleaving the gloom, the fair celestial light
Softens and gilds the horrors of the storm,
And richest cordials to the heart conveys.

O glorious solace of immense distress,
A conscience and a God! A friend at home,
And better friend on high! This is my rock
Of firm support, my shield of sure defence
Against infernal arrows. Rise, my soul,
Put on thy courage. Here's the living spring,
Of joys divinely sweet and ever new.
A peaceful conscience, and a smiling heav'n.

The two universities of Edinburgh and Aberdeen in the year 1728 severally conferred on him unsolicited and without his knowledge, the degree of doctor in divinity. This academical honour was never better bestowed or received with less vanity; and happy would it have been for such seminaries had titles of this sort never been disgraced by any thing mercenary in their source or by ignorance or superciliousness in their subjects. In this case the honour was reciprocal, so far as a diploma may be allowed to bear any proportion to poignancy of genius, highly cultivated understanding, the richest talents of the head, added to the most amiable virtues of the heart.

Although a non-conformist from principles and uniformly such in practice, he held a friendly correspondence with some of the first characters in the established church. Among these were Secker, archbishop of Canterbury, Gibson, bishop of London; Hort, archbishop of Tuam, and many others

of elevated rank and eminent literary reputation. Their letters* to him are written in an uncommon strain of veneration and esteem, and although many expressions occur which bear too near an affinity to the language of flattery, those who knew the man and were benefited by his writings may be allowed some latitude beyond what is common in such cases.

If, while the deadly night shade of infidelity is diffusing its poison through our country, churchmen and dissenters, especially the clergy and those who entertain the same views of the faith that was once delivered to the saints, could agree thus to differ, and lay aside all intemperate zeal for and against the modes and forms of religion; would they mutually cherish brotherly love and unite as far as possible to aid each others exertions in the common cause; what a mighty change would soon be produced in the state of religion, and what sources of pleasure they would daily open to the advocates of the truth?

Mental light has no immediate or necessary dependance upon exterior circumstances, nor can it be confined within the bounds of any denomination, so like that glorious element its progress is irresistible, and must be unbounded in its dominion. Here superstition has no influence, bigotry has no power; and although we cannot accurately pronounce the Shibboleth and Sibboleth of different parties, we may yet unite our prayers and our zeal where, as the candidates for eternal life, we are all one. As we often perceive in chemical experiments that two things the most hostile by nature, and most averse to unite, by the addition of a third become perfectly miscible, so by a spirit of true piety and candour poured out upon both, we should see conformists and non-conformists extend to each other the right hand of fellowship and unite in every office of friendship and in all the obligations of their religious characters. May the auspicious period soon dawn when Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and when Judah shall not vex Ephraim.

> Let us no more contend, nor blame
> Each other, blamed enough elsewhere, but strive,
> In offices of love, how we may lighten
> Each other's burden in our share of woe†.

"Such characters as Dr. Watts still live and flourish in our churches: (I adopt the words of a late acute writer). It would be easy to give a long list of names from the dawn of the reformation to this day: but I sacrifice the pleasure of doing so to the modesty of my friends. This however, I will venture to say, and *no man shall stop me of this boasting*, we have in our churches now exact copies of our ancient models. *The prophets, do they live for ever?* Yes they do. *The spirit of Elijah rests upon Elisha!* The grave solidity of Cartwright and Jacob seemed to reside in our Owens and Goodwins and Gills. The vivacity of Watts and Bradbury and Earle lives in others, whom I dare not name. The patient laborious Fox, the silver Bates, the melting Baxter, the piercing Mead, the generous Williams, the instructive Henry, the soft and candid Doddridge, Ridgley, and Gale, and Bunyan and Burgess, in all their variegated beauties yet flourish in our pulpits exercising their different talents for mutual edification. We have Barnabas the son of consolation, and Boanerges the thunderer, still.—

* Letters published by Dr. Gibbons. † Milton.

Ye servants of the Most High God, who shew unto to the way of salvation! *Peace be within the walls of your churches, and prosperity within your dwelling-houses**."

One great man after celebrating the just praises of Dr. Watts's talents, after acknowledging he was such as every christian church would rejoice to adopt, descends to the miserable littleness of cautioning the world against his non-conformity, as if that were a diminution of his literary, or a blot upon his theological reputation. A melancholy proof how far a philosophic mind may sometimes be debased by a churlish bigotry; the very spirit that gave birth to all the persecutions which harrassed and oppressed the present established church when she dissented from the church of Rome, and to which we may ascribe all the animosities which divide and degrade those who only deviate in questions of a circumstantial discipline since that period. In Dr. Watts were combined all the excellencies which form a complete reverse of a party zealot, and if a meek and lowly mind could shield the memory of any man from the envenomed influence of this passion, his non-conformity had never been mentioned but with a view of recommending the virtues by which he so greatly adorned it.

As an author no man's posthumous claim upon the gratitude of the church and of his country, can be urged with a more imperative tone: The natural strength of his genius, which he cultivated and improved by a very considerable acquaintance with the most celebrated writers, both ancient and modern, had enriched his mind with a large and uncommon store of just sentiments, and useful knowledge of various kinds. His soul was too noble and large, to be confined within narrow limits, he could not be content to leave any path of learning untried, nor rest in a total ignorance of any science, the knowledge of which might be for his own improvement, or might in any way tend to enlarge his capacity of being useful to others.

Though that which gave him the most remarkable pre-eminence was the extent and sublimity of his imagination: how few have excelled, or even equalled him in quickness of apprehension, and solidity of judgment: and having also a faithful memory to retain what he collected from the labours of others, he was able to pay it back again into the common treasury of learning with a large increase. It is a question whether any author before him ever appeared with reputation on such a variety of subjects, as he has done, both as a prose-writer, and a poet. However this we may venture to say, that there is no man now living of whose works so many have been dispersed, both at home and abroad, that are in such constant use, and translated into such a variety of languages; many of which will remain more durable monuments of his great talents, than any representation we can take of them, though it were to be graven on pillars of brass†.

His excellent friend, Dr. Doddridge, in his dedication of his Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul, congratulates him, "that while condescending to the humble work of forming infant minds to the first rudiments of religious knowledge by his *various Catechisms* and *Divine Songs*, he was also daily reading lectures of logic and other useful branches of philosophy to studious youth, and this not only in private academies but in the most celebrated seats of learning, not merely in Scotland, and in our American colonies,

* Robinson. † Jennings.

where for some peculiar considerations it might be most naturally expected, but, through the amiable candour of some excellent men and accomplished tutors, in our English universities too. And that he was also teaching hundreds of ministers and private christians by his sermons, and other theological tracts, so happily calculated to diffuse through their minds that light of knowledge, and through their hearts that fervour of piety, which God had been pleased to enkindle in his own. And as to my certain knowledge your compositions have been the singular comfort of many excellent christians on their dying beds, for I have heard stanzas of them repeated from the lips of several, who were doubtless in a few hours to begin the song of Moses and the Lamb, so I hope and trust, that, when God shall call you to that salvation for which your faith and patience have so long been waiting, he will shed around you the choicest beams of his favour, and gladden your heart with consolations like those which you have been the happy instrument of administering to others."

Dr. Johnson, whom no one here will suspect of partiality, and whose decisions in such case no one will dispute, acknowledges that few books had been perused by him with greater pleasure, than Watts's Improvement of the Mind, of which he says, "the radical principles may indeed be found in Locke's Conduct of the Understanding, but they are so expanded and ramified by Watts, as to confer upon him the merit of a work in the highest degree useful and pleasing. Whoever has the care of instructing others may be charged with deficience in his duty if this book be not recommended."

Of his Logic, which soon obtained considerable celebrity at home and abroad, Lord Barrington speaks in the following terms of high encomium:

"I returned you my thanks for the kind present of your Logic soon after I received it. I can now do it on much better grounds, for since I have read it, I do not barely thank you for the civility, or the satisfaction I have received on reading a book finely written on a noble and useful subject, or for the profit I have reaped by it, but for a book, by which, I expect, not only the youth of England, but all, who are not too lazy, or too wise to learn, will be taught to think and write better than they do, and thereby become better subjects, better neighbours, better relatives, and better christians; for as wrong reasoning helps to spoil each of these, so far will putting us in a right way of thinking, help to mend us. I think your book so good an help to us this way, that I shall not only recommend it to others, but use it as a manual of its kind myself, and intend, as some have done Erasmus or a piece of Cicero, for another purpose—to read it over once a year."

The author of the Meditations among the Tombs, and the Dialogues between Theron and Aspasio, in a letter of acknowledgment for the present of his discourses on the glory of Christ, says—"To say your works have long been my delight and study, the favourite pattern by which I would form my conduct and model my style, would only be to echo back in the faintest accents what sounds in the general voice of the nation. Among others of your edifying compositions, I have reason to thank you for your sacred songs, which I have introduced into the service of my church; so that, in the solemnities of the sabbath, and in a lecture on the week day, your muse lights up the incense of our praise, and furnishes our devotion with harmony."

The Countess of Hertford, afterwards Duchess of Somerset, writes to

him in a strain of peculiar admiration and thankfulness, on reading his Theological Works. "Almost all the hours I passed alone, I have employed in reading your works, which for ever represent to my imagination the idea of a ladder or flight of steps, since every volume seems to rise a step nearer to the language of heaven, and there is a visible progression toward that better country through every page, so that, though all breathe piety and just reason, the last seems to crown the whole, till you shall again publish something to enlighten a dark and obstinate age, for I must believe that the manner in which you treat divine subjects, is more likely to reform and work upon the affections of your readers, than that of any other writer now living. I hope God will, in mercy to many thousands, myself in particular, prolong your life many years. I own this does not seem a kind wish to you, but I think you will be content to bear the infirmities of the flesh some years longer, to be an instrument in the hands of God, toward the salvation of your weak and distressed brethren."

Dr. Vicesimus Knox, in his Christian Philosophy, after a long citation from the Inward Witness to Christianity, concludes thus:—"For my own part, I cannot but think this good man approached as nearly to christian perfection as any mortal ever did in this sublunary state; and therefore I consider him as a better interpreter of the christian doctrines than the most learned critics, who, proud of their reason and their learning, despised or neglected the very life and soul of christianity, the living, everlasting gospel, the supernatural operation of divine grace; and be it ever remembered, that Dr. Watts was a man who cultivated his reason with particular care, who studied the abstrusest sciences, and was as well qualified to become a verbal critic, or a logical disputant on the scriptures, as the most learned among the doctors of Sorbonne, or the greatest proficients in polemical divinity. I mentioned this circumstance for the consideration of those who insinuate that the doctrines of grace cannot be entertained but by ignorant as well as fanatical persons; by persons uninitiated in the mysteries of philosophy."

His Theological Works are numerous, and none of them appear to have been hurried into the world under the impulse of a thoughtless vanity. The perspicuity and elegance of his expression and the richness of his imagination, enliven the most common subjects, and add lustre to the most interesting. The multiplicity and diversity of his native and acquired talents are every where conspicuous; and the application of these talents uniformly discovers an accurate knowledge of human nature, a high veneration of the gospel, an unshaken attachment to the cause of christian liberty, and an habitual readiness for any sacrifice to the virtue and happiness of the world. While exploring the most abstruse subjects of corporeal and spiritual nature, he became a teacher of babes; and that wayfaring men, though almost ideots, might not err in the path of life, he laid aside the metaphysician and the philosopher, to explain the doctrines and familiarise the history of the bible. "Whatever he took in hand was, by incessant solicitude for souls, converted to theology; it is difficult to read a page without learning, or at least wishing, to be better. The attention is caught by indirect instruction, and he that sat down only to reason, is on a sudden compelled to pray."

The Psalms and Hymns of Dr. Watts, which have given his name a kind of immortality in our worshipping assemblies, deserve to be mentioned, independent of their intrinsic merit, for the circumstance in which they originated.

The Hymns which were sung at the dissenting-meeting in Southampton, were so little to his judgment and taste, that he could not forbear complaining of them to his father. His father, who, perhaps, fondly attached to his old guides in this service, and impatient of innovations, was not very well pleased, bid him try what he could do to mend the matter. He immediately set to work, and so successful was he in his first essay, that a second was earnestly desired, and then a third, and a fourth, till there was such a number as to make up a volume, which was afterwards considerably enlarged. The first edition of his Hymns was published in 1707, and his Psalms, 1719. The happy manner in which he has rendered these composures intelligible to the ignorant, yet instructive and delightful to the more intelligent, shew at once, how warm a desire of extensive usefulness animated his heart, and how skilful an hand directed his pen; while the strong images, the bold flights, the lively painting, the sublimity of thought, and majesty of expression, which occur in some other of his poetical writings, proclaim what a master he was in that art, and how much self-denial he practised, in condescending to a lower strain, when the genius for which he wrote required it.

The two volumes published as the Dr.'s Posthumous Works, must be ascribed to the avarice of a bookseller, or to the urgent calls of hunger, expecting success from the celebrity of his character, and the general avidity with which his productions were received. These volumes are said, in the title-page, to be compiled from papers in possession of his immediate successors, and to be adjusted and published by a gentleman of the University of Cambridge. Many of the hymns in the first volume were published before, and, with only one exception, they are unmercifully mutilated. The rest bear no more resemblance to the poetic ardor and sublimity of Dr. Watts's muse, than the grasshopper does to the eagle. It would be easy to select various proofs of imposition in this work, were it necessary; but none, who have read the poet, can hesitate to pronounce it a malicious attempt to hold him up to ridicule and contempt; or, which is most probable, a design to make his name the medium of pecuniary advantage. Such a farrago should not have been mentioned, but as a reason for their exclusion from the genuine works.

Such authors as the subject of these memorials are the glory of nations. The man whose writings expose the doctrines and ordinances of christianity to contempt, who artfully endeavours to destroy the cause of virtue, while he affects to celebrate its praise, by taking away all its animating principle, throws open the flood-gates of licentiousness, destroys all public spirit, social order, domestic fidelity, and personal happiness, takes the subject from under the restraint of the civil law, saps the foundation of honour and confidence in commerce, involves his wretched proselytes in the guilt of inveterate rebellion against the Prince of Life, and subjects them to inconceivable woes in the future world. When authors, whose writings have thus subverted the faith, poisoned the morals, and destroyed the souls of their deluded readers, are forgotten, or only remembered as objects of execration, the Works of Dr. Watts justly claim the gratitude of his country, will be perpetuated as blessings in the church, and be honoured with the final plaudit of the Supreme Judge.

The dissolution of Dr. Watts fully corresponded with his holy and useful life. For near three years prior to this period, his lamp had given such a tremulous and uncertain light, that his friends daily expected its utter extinction. But his prospects werebright and his confidence was firm. If his

intellectual faculties were not vigorous, they yet continued to perform their office to the last. When in full possession of himself he committed his soul into the hands of his Redeemer, triumphing over all the terrors of death. Thus glorifying his profession and the ministry of the gospel, administering the consolations of hope to his sorrowing friends, and displaying the faith, fortitude, and joy, which form the noblest conclusion of a life devoted to God.

Soon after, Mr. Henry Grove, who contracted an intimate friendship with Dr. Watts, had published a funeral sermon on the fear of death; the subject was treated in so masterly a manner that a person of considerable rank in the learned world declared, that after reading it he could have laid down and died, with as much readiness and satisfaction as he had ever done any thing in his life. Some similar effects may, it is hoped, be produced by reviewing the circumstances of an event, where theory was most unusually realized in experimental fact. It is not from books however finely written, but from the lips of the dying disciple of Jesus, that we shall learn the exercise of patience and courage in the anticipation of that state where we shall flourish in everlasting health and vigour.

Let us mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, and see how peacefully he reposes on his dying pillow, with what chearfulness he bids adieu to his friends, and how he descends to the grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in his season. The day of this great man's life was not more useful in its progress, than serene and glorious in its close. Without perturbation he read his summons to appear before the Judge of all, and without reluctance he obeyed. After a long and rough voyage he came with a propitious gale within sight of the peaceful harbour; and how fully he enjoyed the prospect, his own language in that happy period will abundantly testify.

With application to himself he often repeated the words of Paul to the Hebrews, "Ye have need of patience that after ye have done the will of God, ye may receive the promise." Not that he was exercised with bodily pain, but, retaining his desire to do good in undiminished force, he was not at times so resigned to his providential disability as he should have been. In such a frame of mind perhaps, he once said, "I wonder why the great God should continue me in life, when I am incapable of performing him any further service." But now he had finished the work given him to do, he must quietly wait till the Lord of the vineyard shall bestow the promised, the desired reward. With these considerations he would check the encroachments of impatience, "The business of a christian," said he, "is to bear the will of God, as well as to do it. If I were in health I could only be doing that, and that I may do now. The best thing in obedience is a regard to the will of God, and the way to that is to get our inclinations and aversions as much mortified as we can." He discoursed much of his dependance upon the atoning sacrifice of Christ; and his trust in God through the Mediator remained unshaken to the last. "I should be glad," he said, "to read more, yet not in order to be confirmed more in the truth of the christian religion, or in the truth of its promises, for I believe them enough to venture an eternity on them." How his soul was absorbed in the faith of these promises, and the certainty of their accomplishment, all who visited him during the illness which terminated in his dissolution, could bear testimony.

On retiring to rest, he has been heard to declare, that if his Master had no more work for him to do, he should be glad to be dismissed that night. "I bless God," he would say, at other times, "I can lie down with comfort at night, not being solicitous whether I awake in this world, or another." When he was almost worn out by his infirmities, he observed in conversation with a friend, that he remembered an aged minister used to say, that the most learned and knowing christians, when they came to die, have only the same plain promises of the gospel for their support, as the common and unlearned: "and so," said he, "I find it. It is the plain promises of the gospel that are my support, and I bless God they are plain promises, that do not require much labour and pains to understand them; for I can do nothing now but look into my bible for some promise to support me, and live upon that." In this way the promises became a present inheritance of support and consolation both as the security and prelibations of his future exaltation before the throne of God; and "As the setting sun appears of greater magnitude, and his beams of richer gold than when in his meridian, so this dying believer was richer in experience, stronger in grace, and brighter in his evidences for heaven than was usual in any period of his life." With some view, no doubt to this happy state of mind, Dr. Grovesnor, being at the funeral of Dr. Watts, a friend said to him, "Well Dr. Grovesnor, you have seen the end of Dr. Watts; and you will soon follow him: what think you of death?" "Think of it."—he replied, "why when death comes I shall smile upon him, if God will smile upon me."

His freedom from corporeal pain, and his uninterrupted assurance that all was well, excited the strongest sentiments and expressions of gratitude in his last moments, when without a struggle or a groan, November 25, 1748, in the 75th year of his age, he departed this life, eminently beloved of God, and lamented by all wise and good men. Such are the joys and honours derived from the doctrines of Christianity. Such are the joys and honours by which the true believer shall be faithfully attended through the valley of the shadow of death, and which will be consummated in the fruition of an eternal weight of glory. Let those who doubt and despise our faith consider of what importance religion is to the sick and dying, and till they possess the power of healing, and of restoration from the borders of the grave, let them not take away the only support of our hopes, the only solace of our afflictions: Let them not interpose between us and the bright prospects of life and immortality.

The remains of this great man were deposited in Bunhill-fields burial-ground, London; and to give a final testimony to his affection and liberality, his pall was supported by six ministers, two of the presbyterian, two of the congregational, and two of the antipoedo-baptist denomination, Dr. Samuel Chandler delivered an oration at the grave, and Dr. Jennings preached his funeral sermon to the church of which Dr. Watts had been pastor, from Hebrews xi. 4. "By it he being dead yet speaketh." Several other eminent men gave similar testimonies of respect to his memory. But while his various excellencies procured him these honours, he in his life time, was concerned to prevent whatever might be considered as inconsistent with the humility of his character. He gave directions to have only a stone erected over the place of his interment, with this humble inscription:

"ISAAC WATTS, D. D. Pastor of a Church of Christ, in London, successor "to the Rev. Mr. Joseph Caryl, Dr. John Owen, Mr. David Clarkson, and "Dr. Isaac Chauncy; after fifty years of feeble labours in the gospel, inter-"rupted by four years of tiresome sickness, was at last dismissed to his rest.

"In uno Jesu omnia.

"2 Cor. v. 8.—Absent from the body, and present with the Lord.

"Col. iii. 4.—When Christ who is my life shall appear, then shall I also "appear with him in glory."

A handsome tomb, bearing this inscription, with the time of his death, was accordingly erected at the joint expence of Sir John Hartopp, once his pupil, and Lady Abney, in whose house he so long and so happily resided.

DEDICATION

TO

THE FIRST VOLUME OF SERMONS.

To the Church of Christ assembling in Berry-street, London.

Christian Friends, dearly beloved in our Lord;

IT is in the service of your souls that I have spent the best period of my life ministering the gospel among you. Two and twenty years are now expired since you first called me to this delightful work; from that time my cares and labours, my studies and prayers, have been employed in your behalf. I trust they have been accepted with God, and, through his almighty blessing, have obtained some success. As to their acceptance with you, I have too many and plain evidences to admit a doubt of it; which I have often thankfully acknowledged to God and you. Your forward kindness hath always forbid my request, nor do I remember that you ever gave me leave to ask any thing for myself at your hands, by your constant anticipation of all that I could reasonably desire.

While I was thus walking among you in the fellowship of the gospel with mutual delight, God was pleased to weaken my strength in the way, and thereby has given you a fairer opportunity to shew the vigour of your affection under my long weakness and confinement. Your diligence and zeal in maintaining public worship in the church, under the pastoral care of my dear brother and colleague*, in your special days and hours of prayer for my recovery, your constant and fervent addresses to the throne of grace on my account in your weekly solemn assemblies, and your chearful supply of my necessities under so tedious an affliction, have made me your debtor in a high degree, and have strengthened the bands of my duty, by adding to them the bands of your love.

As soon as I was capable of the smallest attempt of service, you received me with all joy in the Lord: And though we were rivals in this pleasure, yet you will allow that my joy was, at least equal to yours; for I think I can pronounce it with great sincerity, that "there is no place, nor company, nor employment, on this side heaven, that can give me such a relish of delight, as when I stand ministering holy things in the midst of you."

As fast as my health increases, you may assure yourselves it is devoted to your edification. It often grieves me to think how poor, feeble, and short, are my present labours among you; and yet what days of faintness I generally feel after every such attempt: So that I am continually prevented in my design of successive visits to you, by the want of active spirits while I tarry in

* Mr. Samuel Price.

the city; and if I attempt to stay but a week or ten days there, I find a sensible return of weakness; so that I am constrained to retire to the country-air, in order to recruit and maintain this little capacity of service.

I bless God heartily, and you are my witnesses, that in my better seasons of health heretofore, and in the intervals of my studies, I was not a stranger of your private families, nor thoughtless of your soul's improvement.

What shall I do now to make up these defects? What can I do more pleasing and profitable to you, than to seize the advantages of my retirement, to review some of those discourses which have assisted your faith and joy in my former ministry, and to put them into your hands? Thus something of me shall abide with you in your several houses, while I am so incapable of much public labour, and of personal visits.

This, my friends, is the true design of sending this volume to the press: And though many of my brethren may compose far better sermons than I, whose persons I love and honour, and their labours I read with reverence and improvement, yet I am persuaded, that share which I have in your affections, will render these discourses at least as agreeable to your taste, as those of superior excellency from other hands. If any other christians shall think fit to peruse them, and find any spiritual benefit, they must make their acknowledgments to God and you.

I cannot invite the loose and fashionable part of mankind, the vain censors of the age, and the deriders of the ministry, to become my readers: Too many of them grow weary of christianity, and look back upon heathenism with a wishful eye, as the Jews did of old upon the leeks and onions of Egypt, when they grew angry with Moses, and began to loathe the bread of heaven. These persons will find but little here that suits their taste; for I have not entertained you with lectures of philosophy, instead of the gospel of Christ; nor have I affected that easy indolence of style which is the dry delight of some modish writers, the cold and insipid pleasure of men who pretend to politeness. You know it has always been the business of my ministry to convince and persuade your souls into practical godliness, by the clearest and strongest reasons derived from the gospel, and by all the most moving methods of speech, of which I was capable; but still in a humble subserviency to the promised influences of the Holy Spirit, I ever thought it my duty to press the conviction with force on the conscience, when light was first let into the mind. A statue hung round with moral sentences, or a marble pillar with divine truths inscribed upon it, may preach coldly to the understanding, while devotion freezes at the heart: But the prophets and apostles were *burning and shining lights;* they were all taught by inspiration to make the words of truth glitter like sun-beams, and to operate like a *hammer*, and *a fire*, and *a two-edged sword**. The movements of sacred passion may be the ridicule of an age which pretends to nothing but calm reasoning. Life and zeal in the ministry of the word, may be despised by men of luke-warm and dying religion: *Fervency of spirit is the service of the Lord*†, may become the scoff and jest of the critic and the profane: But this very life and zeal, this sacred fervency, shall still remain one bright character of a christian preacher, till the names

* 2 Cor. iv. 4, 6. John v. 35. Jer. xxiii. 29. Heb. iv. 12.

† Acts xviii. 25. Rom. xii. 11.

of Paul and Apollos perish from the church; and that is till this bible and these heavens are no more.

In some of these discourses indeed I have not had the opportunity of so warm and affectionate an address to the hearers. A true and just explication of scripture and a convincing proof of the doctrine proposed, have been the chief things necessary; yet I have endeavoured, even there, to give a practical and pathetic turn, as far as the design of the text would bear it: But in the other sermons I blame myself more for the want of zeal and devout passion, than for the excess of it.

I will readily confess, there are here and there some periods where the language appears a little too elevated, though not too warm; I know it is not the proper style of the pulpit: but there is some difference between speaking and writing. In one the ear must take in the sense at once; in the other, the eye may review what the first glance did not fully receive. Besides, my friendly readers will now and then indulge a metaphor, to one who from his youngest years, has dealt a little in sacred poesy.

You are my witnesses, that in the common course of my ministry, I often press the duties of sobriety and temperance, justice and charity, as well as the inward and spiritual parts of godliness. But since treatises on the latter subjects are seldom published now-a-days, I have permitted the matters of secret converse between God and the holy soul, to take up a larger share in these discourses; and it has been my aim to rescue these arguments from the charge of enthusiasm, and to put them in such a light, as might shew their perfect consistence with common sense and reason. Hereby I have done my part to defend them against the daily cavils of those low pretenders to christianity, who banish most of these things from their religion, and yet arrogate and confine all reason to themselves.

It is necessary that a christian preacher should teach the laws of sobriety, the rules of charity and justice, our duty to our neighbour, and our practice of public religion; but it is my opinion that discourses of experimental piety, and the work of the closet, should also sometimes entertain the church and the world. Our fathers talked much of pious experience, and have left their writings of the same strain behind them: They were surrounded with converts, and helped to fill heaven apace; for God was with them. But I mourn to think that some are grown so degenerate in our days, as to join their names and their works together in a common jest, and to ridicule the sacred matter of their sermons, because the manner had now and then something in it too mystical and obscure, and there is something in their style unfashionable and unpolished.

It must be acknowledged indeed, to the honour of the present age, that we have some pretences above our predecessors to freedom and justness of thought, to strength of reasoning, to clear ideas, to the generous principles of christian charity; and I wish we had the practice of it too. But as to the savour of piety and inward religion, as to spiritual-mindedness, and zeal for God, and the good of souls; as to the spirit and power of evangelical ministrations, we may all complain, the glory is much departed from our Israel. Happy the men who are so far assisted and favoured of God, as to unite all these excellencies, and to join the honours of the past and present age together! How far it has been attempted amongst you, I have a witness in your

consciences: and though I keep a sincere and painful sense within me of my great defects on either side, yet I must still pursue the same attempt; and with reverence and zeal I beg leave to trace the footsteps of my brethren, who come nearest to this shining character.

In all these things I rejoice, and cannot conceal my joy, that my kind and faithful companion in the service of your souls, practises his ministry with the same views and designs; and he hath been sensibly owned and assisted of God, to support and to build up the church, during my long confinement. His labours of love both for you and for me, shall ever endear him both to me and you. May the divine blessing gloriously attend his double services in the seasons of my absence and painful restraint! May your united prayers prevail for my restoration to the full exercise of my ministry among you! And may you all receive such lasting benefit by our associated labours, that you may stand up, and appear as our crown and our joy in the great day of the Lord! This is the continual and hearty prayer of,

My dear Friends,

Your affectionate and afflicted

Servant in the gospel,

I. WATTS.

Theobalds in Hertfordshire,
February, 21, 1720-21.

PREFACE*.

I AM bound to give thanks to God always, for the acceptance that my sermons have found among the more pious and religious part of mankind. As it hath been the chief design of my ministry to explain the common and most important things of our religion, to the understanding of every christian, and to impress the most necessary duties of it on the spirit and conscience, so when I am solicited to make my labours yet more public, I would repeat the same work; I would fain give my readers the clearest conceptions of some of the great articles of christianity, and draw out the plain principles of truth which are in the head, to a powerful and holy influence over the heart and life.

These discourses have but little hope to gratify those curious minds, who turn over the leaves superficially to search if there be any new discoveries in them, and being disappointed, lay down the book with disdain: My chief intent was to entertain and assist those humble christians, who converse in secret with God and their own souls.

And since it is the custom of many persons to read a sermon in the evening of the Lord's-day, as part of their family-worship, I was desirous also to suit the sermons which I publish to such a pious service. Now when the discourses, which are rehearsed in families have much of criticism and speculation in them, or long and difficult trains of reasoning, every one may observe, what a negligent air sits upon the faces of the hearers, what a drowsy attention is given to this religious exercise, and the greatest part of the household find very little improvement.

I grant, it is sometimes necessary to preach, and print such discourses which are more critical and laborious in exposition of difficult texts, and which by artificial trains of argument, may penetrate deep into the hidden things of God, and *bring forth things new as well as old.* But I am content to wave the honour of such performances in the more general course of my labours, whether of the pulpit or the press, and chiefly to pursue those methods which more directly tend to the edification of the bulk of mankind, in the knowledge of Christ and in practical godliness.

We are too often ready to judge that to be the best sermon, which has many strange thoughts in it, many fine hints, and some grand and polite sentiments. But a christian in his best temper of mind will say, "That is a good sermon which brings my heart nearer to God, which makes the grace of Christ sweet to my soul, and the commands of Christ easy and delightful: That is an excellent discourse indeed which enables me to mortify some unruly sin, to vanquish a strong temptation, and wean me from all the the enticements of this lower world; that which bears me up above all the disquietudes

* In the fifth edition the three volumes in 12mo were reduced into two in octavo, and the prefaces abridged and united by the author.

of life, which fits me for the hour of death, and makes me ready and desirous to appear before Christ Jesus my Lord." If the publication of these discourses shall be so happy, as through the influence of the Blessed Spirit to attain these ends, I have obtained my best aim and hope, and will ascribe the glory to God my Saviour.

The first sermons which I published* were taken up chiefly in the more spiritual parts of our religion, and such as relate more immediately to the secret transactions of the soul with God, and with his Son Jesus Christ. In several following discourses, I have attempted to explain many duties of the christian life which refer to our fellow-creatures. I hope no man who loves the gospel of Christ, will knit his brow and throw disgrace upon the book, with a contempt of dull morality: If such a person would give himself leave to peruse these sermons, perhaps he would meet with so much of Christ and the gospel in them, that he might learn to love his Saviour better than ever he did, and find how necessary moral duties are to make his own religion either safe or honourable: While *we are saved by faith* in the blood and righteousness of the Son of God, we must remember also, that it is such a *faith as worketh by love*, for *faith without works is dead*, and useless to all purposes of hope and salvation.

My design in these sermons is to represent vice and virtue in their proper colours. I foresee that many readers will quickly spy out their neighbours' names amongst the vicious or unlovely characters; but it would turn perhaps to their better account, if they can find their own: for there is many a description here that a hundred persons may lay a righteous claim to. It was my business to set a faithful glass before the face of conscience, by which we may examine ourselves, and learn *what manner of persons we are;* and I pray God to keep it daily before my own eyes. I acknowledge my defects, and stand corrected in many of my own sermons. Blessed be God for a Mediator who is *exalted to give repentance and forgiveness of sins.*

Yet it may not be an improper or unsuccessful method of reproof to fold down a useful leaf now and then for a friend, and give him notice in such an inoffensive manner of any blemishes that may belong to his character. Thus the silent page shall bestow upon him the richest benefit of friendship; it may whisper in his ear a secret word of admonition, and convey it to his conscience without offence. Such a gentle monitor may awaken him to inward shame and penitence; may rouse his virtue to shine brighter than ever, and scatter the clouds that hung dark upon the evidence of his graces.

Since I first published these discourses†, the world has been furnished with a more complete account of most of these subjects, in that excellent treatise called the "Christian Temper," which my worthy friend Doctor Evans hath sent abroad, and which is, perhaps, the most complete summary of those duties which make up the christian life, that hath been published in our age.

The next three sermons are employed on that divine subject, which I am ready to call the chief wonder and glory of the christian religion, that is, "the great atonement for sin made by the death of Christ, and the practical

* 21st February, 1720—21. † 25th March, 1723.

nses derived thence*. This is the blessed foundation of our hope, which I have endeavoured to set in a clear light, and to support by reasoning drawn from the types and predictions of the Old Testament and the clearer language of the New. This is that grace and that righteousness which was witnessed by the law and the prophets, as St. Paul expresses it; Rom. iii. 24. This is that important work of the blessed Saviour, who was promised to the guilty world ever since the fall, and whose various glories have been well represented, according to ancient prophecy, in a happy correspondence with the doctrine of the New Testament, by a volume of "Discourses on the Messiah," lately published by Dr. William Harris. I wonder how any man can read all these correspondencies of the type, prophecy and history, and not be convinced that Jesus was the appointed Saviour of the world.

The several sermons that follow next, are all formed upon some of the most momentous concerns of a christian, *viz.* How to improve every thing for the advantage of our own souls; how to look on all things as working for our good; how to employ the time of life to noble purposes, and such as the saints above can never be employed in; and to improve the death of others to valuable ends in the christian life, and especially to a preparation for our own departure. The death of that worthy gentleman and excellent christian, Sir Thomas Abney, gave the first occasion to some of these meditations, for the use of the mourning family, which were much amplified afterwards in my public ministry. Here I have endeavoured to awaken myself and my friends to an immediate and constant readiness for a dismission from this sinful, and sorrowful, and tempting world: And God grant when that awful hour approaches, I may be so far honoured by divine grace, as to become an example as well as a teacher.

The last discourse of all, exhibits the "most plain and obvious representation of the doctrine of the blessed Trinity, as it lies in the bible, and the great and necessary use that is to be made of it in our religion." It is a doctrine that runs through the whole of our serious transactions with God, and therefore it is necessary to be known by men. Without the mediation of the Son, and the influences of the Spirit, we can find no way of access to the Father, nor is there any other hope of his favour proposed in the gospel.

I thought it proper also, to publish it at this season, to let the world know, that though I have entered into some further enquiries on this divine subject, and made humble attempts to gain clearer ideas of it, in order to vindicate the truth and glory of this sacred article; yet I have never changed my belief and profession of any necessary and important part of it, as will here appear with abundant evidence.

In this sermon I have followed the track of no particular scheme whatsoever; but have represented the sacred Three, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, in that light in which they seem to lie most open to the common view of mankind in the word of God: And I am glad to find what I have drawn out in this manner in seventeen propositions, appears so agreeable to the general sense of our fathers in this article, that I do not think any one of these propositions would be denied or disputed by our divines of the last or present age, who have had the greatest name and reputation of strict orthodoxy†.

* They were first published 25th March, 1727.

† In this complete collection of the author's works there are large additions, as well as many alterations inserted in this sermon 'On the Doctrine of the Trinity' from the author's manuscripts. 1734.

If I may express the substance of it in a few words, it is this: It seems to me to be plainly and evidently revealed in scripture, "That both the Son and the Holy Ghost have such a communion in the true and eternal God-head, as to have the same names, titles, attributes and operations ascribed to them, which are elsewhere assribed to the Father, and which belong only to the true God: And yet that there is such a plain distinction between them, as is sufficient to support their distinct personal characters and offices in the great work of our salvation." And this is what has been generally called the Trinitarian Doctrine, or the doctrine of Three Persons and one God.

At the end of the latter sermons I have endeavoured to assist christians in the devout collection of what they hear or read in a way of pious converse with their own hearts, and with God. In most of those meditations, the reader will find the principal heads of the foregoing sermons rehearsed.

Where the sermons are too long to be read in a family at once, I have marked out proper pauses, that the religious service may not be made tedious. May the great God vouchsafe to send his own Almighty Spirit, wheresoever his providence shall disperse these weak labours of mine in the world, and attend them with his sovereign power and blessing for the welfare of immortal souls! *Amen.*

SERMONS.

SERMON I.

The Inward Witness to Christianity.

1 John v. 10.—He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the Witness in himself.

THE FIRST PART.

THERE are two points of great and solemn importance, which it becomes every man to enquire into: *First*, Whether the religion he professes be true and divine; and *then*, Whether he has so far complied with the rules of this religion, as to stand entitled to the blessings thereof.

The christians of our age and nation, have been nursed up amongst the forms of christianity from their childhood; they take it for granted their religion is divine and true, and therefore seldom enter into the *first* enquiry: but when they come to think in good earnest about religious affairs, their great concern is with the *second*, viz. to know whether they have so far complied with the rules of the gospel of Christ, as to obtain an interest in the promised blessings of it. And when they hear such a text as this, *He that believeth, hath the witness in himself*, they immediately expect that the meaning and design of it should be to *witness* the truth of their own faith, and consequently to prove their own title to salvation.

But in the first christian age the case was far otherwise. The gospel itself was not then universally established, and the disciples of this new religion might have frequent doubts in their own minds concerning the truth of it, while they saw it disallowed and opposed by the world round about them. It was evidently necessary therefore for them to enquire, whether it came from God or no? And it is with this view the apostle John writes these

words, *He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself; viz. he* hath a proof within himself that *eternal life is in the Son*, ver. 11. and is to be obtained by our believing in him. It is to the truth of this doctrine that the *three bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and the three on earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood.* And though the proof of the sincerity and truth of our faith now may be derived from hence by a further consequence, yet the first and direct design of the apostle is to shew, that the truth and divinity of our religion has an inward witness to it in the heart of every believer.

Here give me leave to put you in mind, that it is necessary for you, as it was for the primitive christians, to settle your profession of christianity upon solid grounds; otherwise you are christians but for the same reason that makes a Turk a disciple of Mahomet, or a heathen a worshipper of the Gods of his country; that is, because you were born in such a climate, and under such a meridian. And can you be contented with so poor a pretence to the noblest religion? and lay so sandy a foundation for your eternal hopes? Besides, the day in which we live, threatens you with bold temptations; and how will you stand if you have no surer grounds? Infidelity is a growing weed; the contempt and ridicule of revealed religion, flourish and become fashionable among the gay part of the world; and if you are not furnished with some solid proofs of the gospel of Christ, you may be in great danger of losing your faith; you may be tempted to yield up your religion to a witty jest, and become a heathen for company.

I might say another thing to awaken you to acquaint yourselves with some arguments that will justify and support your belief of the gospel. Suppose you think you have complied with the rules of your religion, and have raised your hopes of heaven to a high degree; should Satan the tempter spread his darkness round your souls, and in a melancholy and gloomy hour assault your faith with such bold questions as these, *How do you know that christianity is the true religion? What tokens have you to shew that it came from God?* If you have no other answer to make, but that *it is the religion of your country*, that *you are born and bred up in it*, think with yourselves how your spirits will be surprized, your comforts languish, and all your high built hopes totter to the ground; unless the Spirit of God, by his uncommon and sovereign grace, should give in an answer to the temptation, and by some immediate and convincing argument support your faith: but if you are negligent to lay a good foundation at first, you have no reason to expect such a divine favour.

Let the importance of this concern therefore keep your attention awake, while I briefly run over some of the proofs of chris-

tianity, and thus lead you down to the surest and best of them, which is contained in my text.

Many are the outward testimonies which God hath given to the gospel of his Son; many witnesses have confirmed it from the time that Christ appeared in the flesh, to the day when St. John wrote this epistle. If we trace his life from the cradle in the manger to his cross and the grave, we shall find the rays of divinity still shining round his doctrine and his works, still pointing to his person, and proving his commission with a convincing and resistless light. At his birth the witnessing angels appeared in much brightness, and while the Son of God lay an infant below, his record was on high; for there appeared a strange new star, and was his witness in heaven. The wise men of the East were his witnesses, when they came from afar, and paid tributes and offerings, gold and incense to the God, the king of Israel. Simeon and Anna in the temple, by the Spirit of prophecy witnessed to the holy child Jesus. And the doctors with whom he disputed at twelve years old, were his witnesses that there was something in him more than man. At his baptism the Father and the Spirit witnessed to the Son of God; they told the world that this was He, the Messiah: The Father by a voice from heaven, saying, *This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased;* and the Spirit descending upon him like a dove. His life was a life of wonders, and each of them witnessed to the truth of his commission, and to the divinity of his doctrine. Every blind eye that he opened, saw and witnessed Jesus, and declared his divine power. Every one of the dead that he raised were his witnesses. They came from the land of silence to speak his glory, and to give a loud testimony to his mission from heaven. The devils themselves, when he drove them out of their possessions, confessed that he was Christ, *The holy one of God;* but he had no mind to accept their witness, and therefore forbade them to speak. Miracles attended him to the cross and the grave, and opened the grave again for him, and made a passage for him to his Father's right hand. Nor did the witnesses of his person and of his doctrine then cease; for *that salvation which began to be spoken by Jesus the Lord,* was afterwards published *by those that heard him, God himself bearing them witness with signs and wonders;* as in Heb. ii. 3, 4.

But all these still were outward witnesses to convince an unbelieving world. There is an inward witness that my text speaks of, that belongs to every true christian: *He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.* And let us prepare now to examine whether our religion be true, and whether we are believers on the Son of God in truth, by searching after this

inward witness; which we shall endeavour to explain, by considering these three things:

I. What believing on the Son of God means.—II. What this inward witness is, that faith gives to christianity.—III. What sort of witness it is, and how it exceeds other testimonies in several respects. And, *Lastly*, We shall make some inferences.

I. What is meant in my text by *believing on the Son of God?* I answer briefly under these two heads. It is,—1. A believing Jesus Christ to be the Saviour of the world.—2. A trust in Christ Jesus as our Saviour.

1. It is a *believing* Jesus Christ *to be the Saviour of the world;* and in this manner it is often expressed by our apostle in these epistles: a belief that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, who was foretold by all the prophets, and represented by all the types and shadows of the Old Testament. This usually includes a belief of the most important things that are related in the gospel concerning his person; such as these, that he is true God and true man, *i. e.* that God and man are united in him; that he was the Son of God before all ages, and the son of man born in time. *That he was the seed of David after the flesh, but declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead;* Rom. i. 3, 4. That he is that eternal Word, who *in the beginning was with God, and was God,* and who was in due time *made flesh and tabernacled among us,* as in John i. 14. This is that *mystery of godliness* which we must believe, *God manifest in the flesh;* 1 Tim. iii. 16.

It implies also our belief of his doctrine, as well as of the divinity and humanity united in his person; *viz.* That we are all sinners condemned by the law of God; enemies to God in our minds, transgressors in our lives, and exposed to eternal death: That the divine law is so strict, so perfect, so holy, and so just that no mere man since the fall can fulfil it, nor yet can excuse or free himself from the condemnation of it: That Christ himself came *to fulfil this law,* as he tells us in *Mat.* v. 17, 18. That he came not only to perform the duties of it by an active obedience, but to put himself under the curse and condemnation for our sakes. Which the apostle to the Galatians expresses in this language, that *in the fulness of time he was made under the law* to become *a curse for us,* that we who are under the law *might be redeemed from the curse, and receive a blessing;* Gal. iii. 13. and iv. 5. That *he died for our offences,* that *he rose again for our justification;* and that he has received the spirit of holiness, which he sends into our sinful natures, to form us fit for that heavenly inheritance which he hath purchased for us by his death. That without this purification of our natures, we can have no hope of heaven, for *without* repentance and *holiness no man shall see*

God. That Jesus Christ our Lord shall raise the dead, shall come in the last day to judge the world, and pass a decisive sentence, and shall then *reward every one according to their works.* Though all these things were not so plainly taught by our Saviour himself in his public ministry in the world, yet these were the doctrines which his apostles preached continually, and they received them from him by private instructions, or the inspiration of his Spirit, so that they may be properly called the doctrines of Christ.

But this is not all that is required of believers; for so much knowledge, and so much faith as this is, the devils may have, and Simon Magus the sorcerer might have as much as this when he believed. The faith that is expressed in this epistle, and in other places of scripture, is more than a bare assent to the great truths of the gospel; for it is such a faith as *overcomes the world,* such a faith as *gains a victory* over things sensual, and over Satan; such a faith as evidences a man *to be born of God.* And therefore something more must be implied in it than a mere belief of the nature and person of Christ, and the truth of his doctrine.

2. It therefore implies a *betrusting the soul into the hands of Christ, that he may be our Saviour.* And I have sometimes thought that those words in the Greek, which we render *faith* and *believing* are continually used in the New Testament, to signify *faith,* a *saving faith*; because they not only signify, in their natural sense, the *believing of a truth,* but the *trusting in a person.* They signify believing the doctrine of Christ, and committing the soul into his hands as a Saviour, as it is expressed by St. Paul; 2 Tim. i. 12. *I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded he is able to keep what I have committed to him.* To *believe on the Son of God* therefore, is when a person, from a sense of sin and danger of eternal death, and his inability to escape any other way, applies himself unto Christ Jesus, as the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. When the soul commits itself into his hands, as one All-sufficient in himself to save, and one appointed by the Father for this glorious purpose. When the soul is made willing to be justified by the merits and righteousness of another, seeing itself unable, by all its own works, to attain to a justifying righteousness. When the soul is desirous to be sanctified by the grace that is from above, because it sees the necessity of holiness, and yet feels itself utterly incapable to renew its own nature, to mortify its own sins, or to form itself fit for the enjoyment of God and heaven. When the soul for these ends, puts itself under the care of Christ Jesus, who is authorised and commissioned by the Father to take care of sinful and guilty souls, to remove and cancel their guilt by his sacrifice,

and invest them with a perfect righteousness, to begin the work of grace in them, to fill them with principles of holiness, and by degrees to fit them for his glory: such a soul is a believer on the Son of God, and such a soul has the witness in himself, that our religion is divine, and that christianity is from above.

II. The second thing I proposed to consider, is, *What is the inward witness that faith gives to the truth of christianity?*

At the first promulgation of the gospel, there were some souls overpowered with present miracles, attended with a divine light shining into them. This was such as they could not resist, such as carried glorious evidence with it, and effectually wrought upon them to believe that our religion was from heaven, that Christ was the Son of God, and that his name was the only ground of hope for salvation. This was miraculous and extraordinary, and not to be expected every day now; such was the conversion of St. Paul to christianity, and many such instances of miracles appeared in the first seasons of the gospel.

But the witness that the apostle John speaks of in my text, is such as belongs to every believer. It is an universal proposition, *He that believes, has the witness in himself.*

In order therefore to enquire into the nature of this testimony, I shall not lead you, nor myself into the land of blind enthusiasm, that region of clouds and darkness, that pretends to divine light. The apostle does not mean here a strong impulse, an irrational and ungrounded assurance that our religion is true. Many times these vehement impulses are but the foolish fires of fancy, that give the enquiring traveller no steady light or conduct, but lead him far astray from truth. Christianity has a better witness than this; being such as belongs to every believer, it must approve itself to the reason of men. And I will endeavour to explain it thus according to scripture.

Let it first be noted here, that the word *witness* is used frequently, by our translators, to signify *testimony*, or *evidence*. Nor will it create any confusion to use these words promiscuously in this discourse, while we distinguish them from the *thing witnesed*, (which in the original, is also μαρτυρια) and is translated the *record*, ver. 10, 11.

Now if we enquire what is that *testimony* to christianity, or that *inward witness* that every believer has in himself, let us consider what that record is which God has testified concerning his Son Christ Jesus. That you will find in the context, ver. 11, 12. *This is the record* or thing witnessed, *that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son; he that hath the Son of God hath life, and he that hath not the Son hath not life.* He then that *believes on the Son of God hath the witness*, or testimony to christianity, in himself, for he hath within him the *thing testified.* He hath eternal life in himself, he hath this eternal life

already begun, and it shall be carried on and fulfilled in the days of eternity. By believing in Christ, we have a glorious testimony, or witness, within ourselves, that Christ is the Son of God, the Saviour of the world, and the author of eternal life; that his person is divine, that his doctrine is true, for eternal life is begun in us.

We shall make this more fully appear, by considering what is *eternal life*, and shewing how far it is found in every believer, and how it becomes a witness of christianity in his heart.

Eternal life consists in *happiness* and *holiness;* it is made up of these two, and there is such a necessary connection between them, that they run into one another; but for order-sake, I shall distinguish them thus:

The happiness of eternal life consists in the pardon of sin, in the special favour of God, and in the pleasure that arises from the regular operation of all our powers and passions. Now these three things are, in some measure, found with every soul that believes in Christ.

The happiness of eternal life consists,——I. *In the pardon of sin;* thence arises *peace of conscience.* This is a part of heaven; the perfection of this peace belongs to the heavenly state. Our pardon is complete on earth, but the sense of this pardon is not complete and free from all doubts, or at least from all danger of doubting, till we arrive at full glory. When a soul is made sensible, that all its iniquities are for ever cancelled, that God will never avenge any of his crimes upon him, when he knows that this God, who has a right to punish with everlasting revenge, is at peace, and will demand no more satisfaction for his sins; this soul then has the beginning of heaven. This is a part of final blessedness, and of complete eternal life.

Now this is, in some measure, found in believers here: They that have trusted in the Son of God, begin to find peace in their own consciences, they can hope God is reconciled to them through the blood of Christ, that their iniquities are atoned for, and that peace is made betwixt God and them. This belongs only to the doctrine of Christ, and witnesses it to be divine: For there is no religion that ever pretended to lay such a foundation of pardon and peace, as the religion of the Son of God does; for he has made himself a propitiation; Jesus the righteous is become our reconciler by becoming a sacrifice: *Rom.* iii. 25. *Him hath God set forth for a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believes in Jesus: Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, Rom.* v. 1. *Behold the Lamb of God, that takes away the sins of the world!* was the language of John, who was but the forerunner of our religion, and took a prospect of it at a little distance: And

much more of the particular glories and blessings of this atonement is displayed by the blessed apostles the followers of the Lamb.

Other religions, that have been drawn from the remains of the light of nature, or that have been invented by the superstitious fears and fancies of men, and obtruded on mankind by the craft of their fellow-creatures, are all at a loss in this instance, and can never speak solid peace and pardon.

1. The religion of the *Heathens*, and the best of philosophers, could never assure us, *Whether God would pardon sin at all, or no.* The light of nature indeed would dictate thus much, that God is, in his own nature, gracious, and compassionate, and kind; but whether God would be gracious to you or me, compassionate to such ill-deserving sinners, as we are, the light of nature could never determine. It is only the Son of God, that came down from the bosom of the Father, could so well inform us how the Father's heart worked towards such sinners, in the designs of pardon and reconciliation.

2. Again, the light of nature could never tell us, *how often God would pardon sinners.* Suppose it could be found out by reason that God is so compassionate, that he could forgive offences, yet it could never be inferred how often we would be forgiven; and if he had pardoned us once, we might for ever despair if we had committed new iniquities: For who but a divine messenger can tell us, that he will often repeat his pardons?

3. The light of nature could never inform us *how great the offences were that could be forgiven;* reason could never tell us, that rebellions of the biggest size, and treasons of the blackest aggravation, should be all cancelled; the light of nature could never say, *All manner of sin, and blasphemy, shall be forgiven to men.* This the Son of God hath only taught us, who came from the bosom of the Father, and who laid a foundation for the brightest displays of pardoning grace.

4. Reason, with all the principles of natural religion, could never teach us *what we must do to obtain pardon,* and on what terms God would forgive. Reason indeed might require us to repent of sin, but it could never assure us, that *he that confesseth, and forsaketh his sins, shall find mercy.* Nor could it shew us any mediator or reconciler between God and man, nor how, or in what manner, we must address ourselves to him, or to an offended God by him; reason could never start a thought of this strange way of salvation, that we must believe, or trust in another's sufferings in order to the pardon of our own sins; that we must depend on the merits and righteousness of one that died, in order to obtain forgiveness and life; that *by faith, in the blood of Christ, God will justify them that believe in Jesus?* What could the light of mere nature teach us concerning this Jesus? And yet

there is no other name under heaven whereby we can be saved; Acts iv. 12.

5. The light of nature, or any religion invented by men, could never acquaint us *with the foundation of divine forgiveness,* nor shew *us any merit sufficient to procure it;* and in this sense we are left at a loss in all other religions, *upon what ground we could expect pardon from God:* For they knew nothing of an atonement equal to our guilt, nothing of a satisfaction great as our offences, and that could answer the high demands of infinite and offended justice. Mankind found out by reason, and by the stings and disquietudes of a guilty conscience, that there was an offended God in heaven; and in several countries they followed the dictates of a wild and uneasy imagination, inventing an endless variety of methods to appease the angry Deity. What multitudes of rams, and goats, and thousands of larger cattle, were cut to pieces, and burnt, to atone for the sins of men? What deluges of blood have overflowed their altars? What fanciful sprinklings, and vast effusions of wine and oil? The first-born son for the transgression of the father, and the fruit of the body for the sin of the soul? What cruel practices on their own flesh? What cuttings and burnings to procure pardon? And yet, after all, no true peace, nor reasonable hope.

The Jewish religion indeed was invented by God himself, and it contained in it the way of obtaining pardon, but it was veiled and darkened by many types and shadows; though it was not defective as to real pardon, yet it was very defective as to solid peace; therefore the apostle tells us, *Heb.* x. 1, 2, &c. *The law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never, with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect, &c.* The sense of which, compared with the following verses, is plainly this, *Those sacrifices, that were so often repeated, could never perfectly take away the conscience of guilt:* there still remained some trembling fears, some uneasy doubts, some painful concern of mind, whether their iniquities should be entirely cancelled or no: because they were convinced that the blood of bulls and goats could not do it, and they could not fully and plainly see the blood of Jesus, the Son of God, the Saviour. Dark hints, and obscure notices of such a Messiah, and such a sacrifice, they had; but such a one as could not generally free their consciences from all sense of defilement and guilt, and fears, though it cleansed their souls in the sight of God.

The Socinians, in our age, can have but very little solid comfort, if they are truly awakened to a spiritual sight of the law of God; for when they have nothing to plead with God, and nothing to trust in but his mere absolute mercy, while they deny the pro-

per satisfaction of Christ Jesus, how weak must their hope be, how feeble is the foundation of it! but when a poor, convinced, awakened soul, that now believes the doctrine of Christ, has been long before tormented in his conscience about atonement for sin, and found no hope; the christian religion, the gospel, with its pardoning grace, and the satisfaction that Christ has made, gives the soul peace, and leads the troubled conscience to rest and quiet; he trusts this gospel, he receives this salvation, and hath the witness in himself that it is divine.

II. The happiness of eternal life consists also in the *special favour* of God, which is distinct from the *pardon of sin;* for it is very possible for a criminal to be pardoned, and not to be made a favourite of the king. The favour of God, and a sense of this favour, is a great part of heaven. This is called seeing of God, often in scripture. When souls are fully possessed of the love of God, when they have it shed abroad in their hearts in perfection; when they know that the infinite and eternal Maker and Governor of all things loves them, and will for ever love them, this is eternal life; and this is enjoyed in some measure here on earth by true believers, this is a part of eternal life begun in the heart of every christian; for when God pardons, he receives into his peculiar favour.

This the christian religion teaches us, but the light of nature could never tell us so: for if the light of nature and reason could have proceeded so far as to acquaint us with pardoning grace in all the extent of it, yet it could never have presumed to assure us *That he should make the rebels he had pardoned his favourites for ever.* We might have been forgiven, and then annihilated. But the scripture teaches us, whom God forgives he makes favourites too. And Christ Jesus has laid the foundation of this double blessing; for he has not only made an *end of sin*, but *brought in an everlasting righteousness;* Dan ix. 24. He has fulfilled the law in all the commands of it, as well as borne the penalty; he has purchased all the blessings of divine love, as well as bought a freedom from divine vengeance. *If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more being reconciled we shall be saved by his life*, Rom. v. 10. And in *ver.* 1, and 2, he saith, *Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.* Thus you see there is not only *reconciliation* but *full salvation;* not only *peace with God*, but the *hope of glory* to be obtained by believing on the Son of God. Many are the instances of saints here dwelling in flesh in a day of grace, that have been raised to a good degree of eternal life in this respect, that have had a joyful sense of the love of God shed abroad in their souls, and upon solid grounds have hoped for glory, such as no other reli-

gion could pretend to furnish them with; and this is a witness to the truth of christianity.

No mere human religion can pretend to tell how this special love of God may be attained, no human religion can ever tell us how long this love of God shall continue; but the word of God gives us full evidence and assurance that the worst of sinners who apply to Jesus Christ the Saviour, in the way of humble faith and hearty repentance, shall not only be forgiven and released from the guilt of sin and punishment, but also shall be beloved of God for the sake of Christ, and that this divine love is everlasting. Read *Acts* iii. 19. *Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.* Acts xvi. 31. *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.* And when persons are interested in these promises, who shall lay any thing to their charge? Who shall condemn them when God justifies? Who shall separate them from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation or distress, famine or sword? No, by no means; *for in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that has loved us;* and we are *persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord;* Rom. viii. 38, &c.

When a rational mind is awakened to see the emptiness of all creatures, and their insufficiency to make him happy, and finds nothing but the eternal love of God capable to make a creature truly blessed; how miserably must that soul be tormented, that knows not whether God will love him or no, nor how this love may be attained; nor, when once attained, how long this love will continue? But he finds an answer to all these painful questions in the gospel of Christ: For the Father loves the Son infinitely, and loves all those that believe on him for his sake; they are for ever accepted; in him who is first and for ever accepted: and they are beloved in him who is first and for ever beloved; Eph. i. 6.

III. The happiness of eternal life consists in the pleasure that arises from the regular operation of all our powers and passions. This was a great part of the happiness of the innocent man; his reason was the guide to all his meaner faculties, and his appetites, and his affections in a sweet harmony followed the conduct of his reason: And as his understanding and judgment put forth their regular dictates, so the meaner powers paid a constant obedience, and pursued their proper objects. There was no irregular anger to set his blood on fire; no intemperate and corrupt wishes to vitiate his nature, to pollute his pleasures, and disturb his peace; none of those tumults and hurricanes in his soul, which we so often feel in our fallen state, and

lament them much oftener than we can suppress them. And as the fancy and appetites of innocent Adam submitted to his reason, so, doubtless, if his Maker were pleased to reveal any sublimer truth to him, which his reason could not comprehend, then reason itself submitted to that revelation, believed the word of a speaking God, and resigned the throne to faith. His natural powers had no uneasy contest, there was no civil war nor rebellion amongst them to interrupt his happiness.

And thus shall it be again, but in a more glorious manner, when we are raised from all the ruins of our fallen state, and eternal life is made complete in heaven.

But before we arrive at that final glory, the same sort of happiness is begun in every believer in a state of grace. These are the beginnings of eternal life, the earnests and the pledges of the perfect blessedness which we hope for; and this arises from our faith in the Son of God. For when we have attained a good hope of forgiving grace through the blood of Christ, and believe that we are beloved of God our Maker, what have we then to do but to abide in his love? We learn to despise those tempting objects that would awaken our intemperate passions, and walk onward in peace and pleasure towards our complete felicity. For since God is become our God through the mediation of his Son, we have no need to seek the meaner delights of sense and appetite, because we possess the supreme. We have the Son of God himself for our leader and example, and he that believes on the Son of God, walks as he also walked.

Besides these moral or persuasive helps that belong to the christian life, we have also the Spirit of God given to reform our natures, to put all our misplaced and disjointed powers into their proper order again, and to maintain this divine harmony and peace. It is the blessed Spirit that inclines reason to submit to faith, and makes the lower faculties submit to reason, and obey the will of our Maker, and then gives us the pleasure of it. And if at any time, through the power of temptation, the violence of appetite, and the imperfection of grace, this blessed harmony and order be disturbed, and this pleasure interrupted; the soul of the christian is never easy till it rise again by repentance, and recur to the Son of God, to fetch new and vigorous supplies of the Spirit, and of this eternal life from him, and thereby it regains its peace and pleasure.

But these thoughts naturally lead me on to the second part of this subject, viz. holiness.

Thus much shall suffice therefore concerning the first part of eternal life, which consists in happiness, viz. pardon of sin, peace of conscience, the favour of God, the sense of his love, and the pleasurable harmony of our natural powers. These are found in true believers, and this is a noble witness to christianity to prove it divine.

SERMON II.

The Inward Witness to Christianity.

1 JOHN v. 10.—He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the Witness in himself.

THE SECOND PART.

WHEN such a text as this is named for the foundation of discourse, some nicer hearers begin to grow jealous, that the preacher is entering into mystery and inward light, and they expect to hear no clear and solid reasoning, nor any justness of thought. Thus blinded by their own prejudices, they prevent their improvement by the ministry of the word; and because they have heard the experiences of christians wittily ridiculed, they resolve to believe that nothing of experimental religion can be justified to strict reason, or have any thing to do with argument.

But how impious, and how unreasonable a fancy this is, will sufficiently appear, if it can be proved that every true christian has a most rational and incontestible evidence of the truth of his religion, drawn from the change that is hereby made in his own heart. If it can once be made evident, that eternal life is begun in every soul that believes in Jesus Christ, this will confirm christianity with a high hand, and confute the wicked scandal for ever.

I have begun this attempt in the first discourse, and have shewn that eternal life is composed of two parts, *viz.* holiness and happiness.

The happiness of it consists in a just and comfortable sense of the forgiveness of sin, and a lively hope and persuasion of the special love of God, and the delightful harmony of all the natural powers, viz. reason, conscience, the will and the passions. Where these are found, heaven is begun; eternal life has taken possession of the soul; and this evidently proves the doctrine that effected it to be divine.

Now, if an atheist, a heathen, or a Jew, should cavil and say, "Are not all your hopes mere presumption? Are not your sense and persuasion of the love of God mere delusions of fancy, and raptures of warm imagination, without any ground, or solid foundation of reason?" The christian may boldly refute such suspicions. These are no vain transports, no foolish visions of hope and joy, because as high and glorious as my comforts and

my expectations are, they are built on a due apprehension of the justice of God, as well as his mercy; I have no hopes of pardon by Jesus Christ, but what are supposed by the righteousness and truth of God, as well as his goodness; for in this way of salvation, offended justice is satisfied to the full, and mercy can exert itself in full glory, without the least dishonour or reflection on the strict righteousness of God. God is just in the justification of a sinner this way; *He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness;* 1 John i. 9.

Besides, says the christian, the change wrought in me is real, and not imaginary; I am quite another creature than once I was: the several powers of my nature, that were wont to be in perpetual war, now enjoy a peaceful harmony, and my soul feels the pleasure, and the divine peace. My strictest and severest reason approves the change, and owns it to be divine.

And thus I am led onward to speak of the other part of eternal life, and that is holiness. This also is found in believing souls, and becomes an evidence of the truth of the gospel.

Holiness may be described by these five necessary ingredients of it.

1. An aversion to and hatred of all sin.—2. A contempt of the present world, in comparison of the future.—3. A delight in the worship and society of God.—4. Zeal and activity in his service.—5. A hearty love to fellow-creatures, and more especially to fellow-saints.

I shall discourse of each of these particularly, and shew that eternal life consists in them, and this eternal life is found in believers.

Holiness consists in an aversion to, and hatred of all sin. This is complete in heaven, and without this, heaven cannot be complete. Into heaven *there entereth nothing that defileth;* Rev. xxi. 27. Every inhabitant there is completely averse to all iniquity, and hates every thing that displeases God; for nothing but perfect obedience is found there; the spirits of the just are there made perfect; Heb. xii. 23. Now this in a measure and degree is found in believers here, for *he that abideth in Christ sinneth not;* 1 John iii. 6. He cannot sin with a full purpose of heart; *he that is born of God cannot sin with constancy* and greediness, as others do that are only born of flesh and blood; he cannot sin without an inward sincere reluctancy, without the combat of the spirit against the flesh; he doth not make a trade of sin, sinning is not his business, his delight and pleasure.—This is a blessed testimony of the truth of the gospel, that faith in the Son of God purifies the heart; Acts xv. 9.

Every christian has an aversion to all sin: If he chuses some sins, to continue in them, and hates other iniquities, he can never

be said to be a true believer in Christ, and to have the work of faith in sincerity wrought in his heart.

Other religions have professed an aversion to some sins, but indulged others. Some make cruelty a part of their duty, and require the sacrificing of mankind to appease the anger of their gods; a bloody and impious practice, as well as a vain and fruitless one! Some forbid murder, but allow and encourage variety of uncleanness, and make that a part of their worship. Other professions have forbid wanton practices, and commended chastity; but they indulge resentment and revenge, as a necessary part of the character of a warrior, or a great man. Carnal and sensual lusts have been opposed and hated by some of the old philosophers, but spiritual iniquities have hereby been promoted. Pride has hereby been wonderfully increased, and none of them can excuse themselves from those sins which make men very like Satan, although they are freed from the brutality of sensual lusts. But the business of the gospel of Christ is to keep men from committing any kind of sins whatsoever.

Other religions have changed one lust for another; but the religion of Christ forbids all manner of iniquity, and changes the whole nature into holiness. Christianity refines the soul in all the powers of it, and inclines us to the duties both of the first and second table; it writes the law of God in the heart, and brings the soul to a sweet compliance therewith. All the affections are renewed; all old things are done away, and all things are become new; he that is in Christ is a new creature; he has crucified the flesh, with its affections and lusts; 2 *Cor.* v. 17. *Gal.* v. 24.

Surely there is a spirit and power that accompanies the religion of our Lord Jesus, such as other religions know not; and this was manifest abundantly in the primitive christians, when those wretches were converted, whose names were once written in that black catalogue that the apostle speaks of; 1 *Cor.* vi. 9. when they by the light of the gospel, were purified, were purged from their defilements, and were made new creatures. The apostle could appeal to the Corinthian church, and say, so vile and filthy were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God; 1 *Cor.* vi. 11. Not in the names of other Gods, and other religions, but in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. Philosophy was raised to a great height in the city of Corinth; it was almost enough for a man to be accounted learned, to have been in that city, and to have known a little of the customs of it; yet all their learning was not sufficient to reform them, for they were a profligate and lewd people still. But the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ

breaking in upon their souls, purified, refined them, and made such an alteration in them, that the world beheld, and were amazed at the surprising change. They thought it strange that the christians would not run to the same excess of riot; 1 *Pet.* iv. 4. They were astonished to see a drunkard at once turn sober and temperate; a lewd unclean wretch, by hearing the gospel, become a professor and an example of chastity; a cruel and passionate temper made calm, and kind, and forgiving; a swine forsake the mire, and put on the nature of a cleanly animal; a dog or a lion changed into a lamb. This wrought conviction with power: This was miracle and demonstration; this witnessed the truth and divinity of the gospel of Christ beyond all contradictions or doubts.

II. A contempt of this world, is another part of holiness, and of heaven; a sacred disregard of temporal things raised by the sight of things eternal.

If we look upwards to heaven, we shall behold there all the inhabitants looking down with a sacred contempt upon the trifles, amusements, businesses, and cares of this present life, that engross our affections, awaken our desires, fill our hearts with pleasure or pain, and our flesh with constant labour. With what holy scorn do you think those souls, who are dismissed from flesh, look down upon the hurries and bustles of this present state, in which we are engaged? They dwell in the full sight of those glories which they hoped for here on earth, and their intimate acquaintance with the pleasures of that upper world, and the divine sensations that are raised in them there, make them contemn all the pleasures of this state, and every thing below heaven. This is a part of eternal life, this belongs in some degree to every believer; for he is not a believer that is not got above this world in a good measure; he is not a christian, who is not weaned, in some degree, from this world: For this is our victory, whereby we overcome the world, even our faith. He that is born of God overcomes the world; he that believes in Jesus, is born of God; 1 *John* v. 1, 4. Whence the argument is plain, he that believes in Jesus the Son of God, overcomes this present world. And where christianity is raised to a good degree of life and power in the soul, there we see the christian got near to heaven: he is, as it were, a fellow for angels, a fit companion for the spirits of the just made perfect. The affairs of this life are beneath his best desires and his hopes; he engages his hand in them so far, as God his Father appoints his duty; but he longs for the upper world, where his hopes are gone before: "When shall I be entirely dismissed from this labour and toil? The gaudy pleasures this world entertains me with, are no entertainments to me; I am weaned from them, I am born from above." This is the language of that faith that overcomes the world: And faith, where it is wrought in truth

in the soul, hath, in some measure, this effect; and where it shines in its brightness, it hath, in a great degree, this sublime grace accompanying it; or rather, (shall I say?) this piece of heavenly glory.

Pain and sickness, poverty and reproach, sorrow and death itself, have been contemned by those that have believed in Christ Jesus, with much more honour to christianity, than ever was brought to other religions by the same profession, and the same practice.

Other religions have in some degree, promised a contempt of the world, a contempt of sickness, and pain, and death; but then it hath been only here and there a person of a hardier mould of body; here and there one in an age, or one in a nation, who by a firmness of natural spirits, an obstinate resolution, attained by much labour of meditation, and toil of thought, hath got above the world, and above death. But our religion boasts of its hundreds and thousands, and that not only those who had firmer natural spirits, or have been skilled in thought and meditation, and absent from sensual things by philosophy, and intellectual exercises; but the feeblest of mankind, the weak things of this world, the foolish and the young, the infant (as it were) in years, and the feeble sex, have been made to contemn this world, and the pleasures of it, the hopes, and the sorrows, pain and death. They have learnt to live above all the enticing joys and affrighting terrors of this present state, that is, to live near to heaven: So that whatsoever religion pretends to a competition with ours, it falls vastly short in this respect, in raising the affections above the world, above the joys and fears of the present life.

Again if we consider what motives have argued the minds of men to the contempt of the world, we shall find the religion of Christ Jesus is far superior to all in this respect.

Other religions have taught men to despise the good things of this world and to be unconcerned about the evils of it, in a mere romantic way: Such was the Stoical doctrine, denying health and wealth, sleep and safety, to have any goodness in them; and professing that pain, poverty, sickness, want, hunger, and shame, were no evils; and upon this account they taught their disciples to be unsolicitous about the one or the other, because they were neither good nor evil. Thus, while they change the use of words they would make stocks and stones of us, rather than intelligent and holy despisers of sensible things; but the christian doctrine teaches us to contemn both the good and evil things of sense and time, by the expectation and prospect of the invisible and eternal world, where both the good and evil things are of infinitely greater importance: So our Saviour preaches, *Mat.* vi. 19, 20. *Lay not*

up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. Pluck out a right eye, cut off a right hand on earth, lest sparing these thy whole body be cast into hell, where the gnawing worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched: *Mat.* v. 29, 30. *Mark* ix. 43, &c. And the afflictions, as well as the comforts of life, are contemned and surmounted by the spirit of a christian, upon the same noble principles; *Rom.* viii. 18. He reckons that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us; and therefore he endures the cross, and despises the shame, following the divine example of Christ.

Other doctrines have endeavoured to raise the minds of men above the solicitudes or cares of this life upon mean and base principles, unworthy of human nature, denying the immortality of the soul, and the life to come. Thus the Epicureans would raise the professors of their religion above the fears of death, by assuring them, that after death there was nothing; that the soul and body died together, were blended in the dust, and were for ever lost in one grave: but, on the other hand, the religion of Christ gives us a view of things beyond the grave, insures a resurrection to us, brings life and immortality to light by the gospel, by Christ Jesus, who together with the Father, is originally possessed of eternal life, and thus leads us on to a glorious contempt of this present world of vanity: *For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen, are temporal; but the things which are not seen, are eternal. For we know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens;* 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18. and v. 1.

Other professions taught their followers not so much to contemn riches and pleasures, as to exchange them for fame and glory, and public applause; and this they looked upon as their chief good. Most of the philosophers may be charged with this just accusation; and Cicero, that great philosopher, in a notorious degree; but the christian both labours and suffers reproach, because he trusts in the living God, and has the promise of the life to come; 1 *Tim.* iv. 8, 10. he goes through the trial of cruel mockings, as well as scourgings and torture, that he may obtain a better resurrection; *Heb.* xi. 35, 36. He neglects his ease and his honours together, and despises fame as well as pleasure and riches, and all mortal desirables, when they stand in competition with his immortal hopes.

Others have despised the grandeur and pomp of life, and thrown their money into the sea; but instead of exalting themselves above men, they have neglected all the necessary duties and decencies of life; they have lived as it were, in common with their fellow animals of the earth, and degraded themselves to the rank and level of brute-beasts; such were the Cynic philosophers: But the christian is diligent and active in all services to God and man, and fulfils the duties of his present state with honour, while he lives upon the hopes of futures and invisibles.

Thus if we consider either the degree of this part of holiness, *viz.* the contempt of the world, if we consider the reasons upon which it is founded, or how far this contempt of the world has prevailed among the generality of christians; we shall find the gospel hath infinitely the advantage of all other doctrines of all other religions.

To see a man raised above this world, and yet exercised in all the duties of life; to see him live with a holy superiority to all things below heaven, and yet fulfilling all his relative duties among men with diligence; to see a man ready every moment to be gone from this world, and yet content to stay here as long as his Heavenly Father pleases, under the troubles, and burdens, and agonies of this life too; this shews the religion to be divine, and from heaven: *he that believes, has this witness in himself*; and where faith rises high, this witness appears evident and glorious.

III. Another part of the holiness of eternal life, consists in a delight in the worship and enjoyment of God. This is perfect in heaven, this is eternal life; *Rev.* vii. 15. They are before the throne of God night and day, that is, perpetually, and serve him there in his temple. Now the christian religion attains this end in a good measure; it brings the soul to delight in divine worship and converse with God, which no mere human religion could ever do: For since no human religion could ever teach an awakened sinner, how he might appear in the presence of a holy God, with assurance and comfort, no other religion could make a soul delight in the worship of God. We can never delight in drawing near to God, that hath infinite vengeance in him, while we know not but he will pour that vengeance out upon us; we fly far from him, unless we have some good ground of hope, that he will forgive us our iniquities and receive us into his favour. Now since there is no other doctrine that shews us how our sins may be forgiven, or how the favour of God may be attained; there is no other religion can allure or draw us into the presence of God with pleasure; *Heb.* x. 19, 20. Let us draw near and worship the Father, in full assurance and confidence, that he will accept our persons and our worship, since we have such an high-priest to introduce us

with acceptance; since by his flesh and incarnation, he has made a way for us to come into the presence of God with satisfaction and pleasure, therefore let us draw near and worship him. The influence of this argument has been found by christians, by every christian; for there is not one that hath believed in Christ, but has had this witness in himself. There is a sweet serenity and calmness of spirit belongs to the souls of those in whom faith is lively and strong, even when they stand before God, though he be a God of terror and vengeance to sinners: for they know Jesus is their atonement, their introducer, their peace; and therefore they love to draw near to him as a God reconciled, they rejoice in him as their highest happiness.

Other professions of men, when they abandoned sensual pleasures, and the vanities of this world, yet taught them that their happiness must flow from themselves, and made their own virtues their heaven, without any regard to God. These philosophers were self-sufficient, full of themselves, and they were so far from making their rivers of pleasure to flow from the right-hand of God, that they even denied their dependance upon him in this respect; and they supposed their wise men to be equal with God, deriving all their blessedness from within themselves. But christianity leads the soul out of itself to God, as it gives a clearer and larger knowledge of God himself, in his felicitating perfections, than the heathens could ever attain; it assures us, that being near to God, is our heaven, and the sight of him is our happiness, as well as provides a new and living way of access to him, through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ: therefore the believer rejoices in all opportunities of drawing near to God, for it is the beginning of his heaven, and his delight in it is an inward and powerful witness to the truth of his religion.

IV. Zeal and activity for the service of God, is another part of heaven, another part of eternal life, and the holiness of it. We have abundant reason to believe that heaven is not a state of mere enjoyment, unactive and idle; but a state of service and activity for that God whose we are, and from whom we have received infinite favours. The angels in heaven are swift messengers to perform the will of their God; *Ps.* ciii. 20, 21. The spirits of just men made perfect are like angels. They do the will of God as a pattern for us on earth; for we are taught to pray, that his will may be done on earth as it is in heaven. What particular services they are employed in of God, we know not; but that they are for ever zealous in those services which God employs them in, we doubt not, we cannot disbelieve. And this active zeal in the service of God, and pursuit of his glory, is the very temper and practice of the true christian; and that not only in some more important enterprizes, but in the common actions of life: Whether

he eat or drink, or whatsoever he does, he makes it his rule of life, to do all to the glory of God; 1 *Cor.* x. 31.

Now this sublime zeal, this noble activity for the service of God and his glory, was not found among the professors of other religions. To glorify God, was not their aim and end; those that rose highest among the old philosophers had not set their aim and end right: They that knew God, glorified him not as God; *Rom.* i. 21. They did not make the glory of God the great design of their actions: It was not zeal for God that animated them to pursue virtue, but merely their own ends, their own satisfaction or ease, or the vanity of their own minds, pride and attempt of superiority above other men; or at best, their motives of action were the reasonableness of virtue, and the benefit of it to themselves and their fellow-citizens. But the glory of God is the aim of christians, and the end of every true believer: he has some degree of zeal for the honour of God, and therefore is active in those duties which God proposes to him.

When we see a person regardless of all his self-interests in the world, and at the same time pursuing the honour of an invisible God, following hard after the glory of that God that his fleshly eyes have not seen; we may say he has something above what mere corrupt nature leads him to, or impresses upon him. The believer has this witness in himself, zeal and activity for the glory of God in the world.

V. The last thing that goes to make up holiness, is a hearty love to all men, and especially to the saints. This is a noble ingredient of eternal life; this is a divine and heavenly temper; this is a beautiful part of the image of God communicated to the soul of man. That God who is the original and foundation of eternal life, is a glorious pattern of this love; he makes his sun to rise, and his rain to fall on the just and on the unjust, and leaves not himself without witness of his divinity, by filling the hearts of men with food and gladness: See Mat. v. 45. Acts xiv. 17. He shews his love to enemies and rebels, in forgiving millions of offences, and pardoning crimes of the largest size and deepest aggravations, and he loves his saints with peculiar tenderness. Our Lord Jesus Christ, who also is the true God and eternal life, came down from heaven to exemplify his divine love. It was his love to mankind that persuaded him to put on flesh and blood, and prevailed with him to suffer pains, agonies, and death, that his enemies might obtain salvation and life. O glorious example of love! Now this is in some measure wrought into the make of every true christian, and imitated in the practice of every true believer: He is obliged, by one of the chief rules of his religion to love his neighbour as himself: that is, to do that to

others, which he thinks just and reasonable that they should do to him; Mat. xxii. 39. Luke vi. 31. He is bound to forgive freely those that offend him, as he hopes for forgiveness of his offences against God; Mat. vi. 14, 15. He rejoices in the welfare of his fellow-creatures, without repining: He loves his enemies, does good to them that hate him, blesses those that curse him, and prays for his persecutors and spiteful foes; Luke vi. 27. He pities all that are miserable, but takes a peculiar delight in his fellow-christians; (the christians must be known by this, that they love one another.) *He does good to all, but especially to the household of faith;* Gal. vi. 10.

Other religions know nothing of so generous and diffusive a love; the men of heathenism were *hateful, and hating one another, and spent their lives in malice and envy;* Tit. iii. 3. They did not so much as aspire to so divine a virtue as the love of enemies; this is the noble singularity of our gospel. The heathen professions encouraged revenge, and made it one ingredient of a hero: But envy and malice, wrath and revenge, must be banished from the heart and practice of a christian, to whom the kindness and love of God our Saviour has appeared; these vices must stand aloof from the saint, and thus bear a testimony to the truth and divinity of the doctrine of Christ.

I grant that every one of these instances, and all these parts of eternal life which I have now described, are not to be found equally in all believers; nor are they in every believer in a very eminent and evident degree. But if we take all of them together, pardon of sin, peace of conscience, the favour of God, and a sense of his love, a pleasurable harmony of all our powers, an aversion to all sin, and hatred of every iniquity, a holy contempt of this world, in the pleasures, as well as in the pains and sorrows of it; delight in the worship of God, and desire after his enjoyment; zeal and activity in service for God, with a sincere aim for his glory, and a hearty love to fellow-creatures and fellow-christians: I say, if we join all these together, we shall find that the christian religion has a witness far superior to all other doctrines that ever pretended to divinity. We shall find that every believer has something of all these qualities wrought in his heart, and it is exemplified in his life. Truly, where none of these are found, that person cannot profess himself a christian with any just ground of hope: Where there is not such a witness as this to the truth of christianity, where there is not this eternal life begun in some sensible measure and manner, that person's profession of christianity is but vain; and his practice and his course contradict the words of his lips, when he pronounces himself a believer in the Son of God.

I might here take notice, that the three that bear witness on

earth to the truth of the gospel, viz. the spirit, the water, and the blood, may be expounded agreeably to the foregoing discourse. The blood may signify the pacification of a guilty conscience by the atoning blood of Christ. The water, may intend the sanctification and purifying of our natures from sinful appetites and practices, as by the washing of water: And the spirit may imply that efficacious influence which a believer receives from the Holy Spirit, both toward the pacification of his conscience, and the purification of his soul. All these witness to the truth of christianity; though others are of opinion, that the Spirit in his miraculous operations, the water, or purity of the nature and life of Christ, and the blood, or his violent death, and the attendants on it, are the three witnesses on earth which the apostle designs; nor can I absolutely determine which is the right.

Before I conclude, I would lay down one caution and one reflection.

The caution is this: That though I exclude all human religions from the honour, power, and glorious effects of christianity, as being utterly incapable of them, yet the Jewish religion, and that of the ancient patriarchs, which were divine, are not hereby totally excluded from this honour, and these characters, but only in part: For there were many souls in whom these beginnings of eternal life were wrought under those dispensations, but not with that glory and evidence as under the christian. And indeed Judaism was but a sort of infant christianity, a veiled gospel. The christian religion is Judaism fulfilled, or the gospel standing in open light. All that holiness and happiness which was found among the Jews or patriarchs, is entirely owing to Christ and his gospel, to the sacrifice, and the spirit, and grace of Jesus, which were typified by the legal atonements, and blood, sprinklings and washings; and which wrought powerfully this divine life in their souls, through all those types, but with feebler conviction, and in a fainter light.

Besides, it should be observed here also, that since the christian religion has received its full authority and divine establishment, the Jewish dispensation ceases, and is no longer owned, or aided by the Spirit of God, to produce these wonderful effects. The types and shadows of that state have now no power to speak peace and pardon to the guilty soul, or to purify our sinful natures, and begin eternal life in them. These are abolished by divine appointment, and God will bear witness to them no more. They who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, are deceivers; 2 John 7. *He that hath not the Son of God hath not life;* 1 John v. 12. So that the doctrine of Christ is the only religion which we know of, that is practised in the world, that has had the stamp of divine authority above sixteen hundred

years; and as there have been multitudes of witnesses to the truth of it, multitudes of souls in the first, and all the succeeding ages, who have felt eternal life wrought in them by the power of the gospel, so there is no other religion ever since can produce and shew such divine testimony; for there *is salvation in no other name;* Acts iv. 12.

The only reflection I shall make, is this: We may derive hence a solid and infallible rule for self-examination, whether we are christians or no. Have we in ourselves this divine witness of our christianity? Have we eternal life wrought in our own hearts? Have we desired peace of conscience and any hope of pardoning grace by trusting in the Son of God? Have we found any satisfaction of soul in drawing near to God by Jesus the Mediator? Do we find a sincere love to God kindled in our souls by the hope of his special favour? Is there any thing of the holiness or happiness of the heavenly state begun within us? Have we an aversion to all sin in some degree answerable to what the saints and angels have in heaven? Have we a holy contempt of this world? Have we overcome the world as those who believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and have put their trust in him? Do we live above it, as those that are within sight of eternal blessedness? Are we come to mount Sion, the city of the living God, to the innumerable company of angels, and the church of the first-born, &c. in this respect? Do we look down upon the tempting vanities of this life with a sacred disdain, something like those that dwell on high in the full possession of life eternal? Is there any similitude between our life and theirs, between our hearts and theirs? Do we delight in the worship of God? Is his presence our joy? Is his enjoyment the object of our desires? Are we zealous for his service? Are our aims set for his glory? Are we active in the discharge of the duties that he hath appointed to us, and the several provinces of service that he has ordained us to be engaged in, in this world? Do we do the will of our heavenly Father on earth, in some measure as it is done in heaven? How stand our hearts affected toward our fellow-creatures? Do we love our neighbour, by dealing with him as we desire he should deal with us? Can we forgive enemies? Do we rejoice in the welfare of others without envy, and take delight in the holiness and peace of our fellow-creatures, and give the poor and mean followers of Christ, a large share in our hearts and kindest affections? If this be the character and temper of our spirits, and this the conduct of our lives, then eternal life is begun in us; then we may say to our own souls, This is the record that God hath given concerning his Son, that there is eternal life in him; 1 John v. 11. and we are sure we build our hopes on a solid foundation, for this life is already begun in our hearts, and the Spirit of God, who has begun this work, will carry it on, and make it perfect in the days of eternity. *Amen.*

SERMON III.

The Inward Witness to Christianity.

1 John v. 10—He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself.

THE THIRD PART.

MANY and glorious are the outward testimonies that God has given to our religion, both in the days when his Son Jesus dwelt on earth, and in the time of the ministration of the apostles who followed their blessed Lord. The miracles wrought, the prophecies fulfilled, and the various glories attending the ministration of the gospel, conspire to confirm our faith; each of them are evidences of the truth and divinity of this doctrine; and all of them joined together, bear such a testimony as cannot be resisted. We live now in these later days at a long distance from those seasons wherein these miracles were wrought, and wherein God appeared in so immediate a manner from heaven, to witness to the truth of the gospel of his Son; but God has taken care to furnish every true believer with a sufficient witness of christianity; we are not left void of evidence at this day. He that believeth, hath the witness in himself. There is an internal testimony given to the gospel of Christ in the heart of every one that receives it in truth. There are the beginnings of that eternal life wrought in the soul, which the Son of God bestows on all believers; he that hath the Son hath life. The spiritual life of a christian runs into eternity; it is the same divine temper, the same peaceful and holy qualities of mind communicated to the believer here in the days of grace, which shall be fulfilled and perfected in the world of glory; and this is a blessed witness to the truth of christianity; it proves with abundant evidence, that it is a religion sufficient to save souls, for the salvation is begun in every man that receives it.

I shall repeat no more of the foregoing discourses, but proceed immediately to answer the last question there proposed, *viz.* What sort of witness this is, which true faith gives to the gospel of Christ, and what are the remarkable properties of this testimony.

I answer, I. It is a witness that dwells more in the heart than in the head. It is a testimony known by being felt and practised, and not by mere reasoning; the greatest reasoners may miss of it, for it is a testimony written in the heart; and upon this

account it has some prerogatives above all the external arguments for the truth of christianity. This inward argument is always at hand, when a believer is in the exercise of his graces, and acting according to his new nature and life: It is an argument that is not lost through the weakness of the brain, the defect of the memory, and long absence from books and study, to which other arguments are liable; it is an argument that cannot be forgotten, while true religion remains in the heart, for it is graven there in lasting characters.

Those words of St. Paul to the Corinthians, in his second epistle, chap. iii. ver. 2, 3. have a reference to our present case: *Ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart.* We have a glory in our religion, that distinguishes it from, and advances it above the Jewish dispensation; their law was written in tables of stone, and afterwards Moses wrote it out at large in a book: But ye have something (says the apostle) written in your hearts, that proves the truth of your religion, and of my divine commission, ye who are converted by my gospel; ye Corinthians, who were once vile as the vilest, and upon whose souls the devil, by his temptations and by his power, had inscribed many dark characters, and seemed to seal you over, and mark you to damnation, ye are now the epistle of Christ, ye have those dismal characters rased out, and ye have golden and bright ones inscribed. The image of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is eternal life, appears fairly written on your souls: Ye are the epistle of Christ, and eternal life is begun in you, and thus the gospel witnesses its own truth and divinity by an internal evidence.

The gospel of Christ is like a seal or signet, of such inimitable and divine graving, that no created power can counterfeit it; and when the Spirit of God has stamped this gospel on the soul, there are so many holy and happy lines drawn or impressed thereby; so many sacred signatures and divine features stamped on the mind, that gives certain evidence both of a heavenly signet, and a heavenly operator.

A christian, who has well studied the doctrines and proofs of christianity, can give sufficient reasons for the truth of them, and for his believing them. He finds what is sufficiently satisfactory, to confirm his belief in the outward testimonies, in the miracles wrought in the world, and the prophecies fulfilled: "I have (says he) in my understanding many arguments and evidences of the truth of the gospel, and my reason is convinced that it is a divine religion. But there is a miracle wrought in my heart that is of more efficacy than this, and is to me a more convincing

proof of the gospel of Christ; eternal life is begun in me. I find my conscience, that was disturbed with the guilt of sin, established in peace, upon solid hopes of pardon. I have an interest in the love of God, and lively sensations of that love; I have a hatred of all sin, I live above the world, and have a holy contempt of the trifles, businesses, and cares of this life: I delight in the company of him that dwells in heaven: I find in my soul that I love him, and love those who are like him; I walk, as seeing him, who is invisible; I have a zeal for his glory, and with active diligence I am employed for the honour of his name in the world. These things I find wrought in me by the gospel of Christ: The discoveries of the nature and works of God, by his gospel, have filled my soul with holy wonder, and bowed my spirit down to adore him. The revelations of his amazing condescension and love, have raised and fired my heart to love him; the examples of superlative piety I meet with in this gospel, have excited my holy imitation; and the motives proposed here, are so awful and so alluring, that all my powers of hope and fear are joined and engaged to constrain my obedience to the excellent and divine precepts of this religion. I feel that I am quite altered from what once I was, I am a new creature, and the change is divine and heavenly.—There is something within me, that bears witness, that my religion is from God.

II. It is a witness that will, in some measure, appear in the life, wheresoever it is written in the heart: For eternal life is an active principle, it will be discovering and exercising itself. Is it possible, that a man should have the pardon of his sins, and sweet peace of conscience, a sense of the love of God, who is an infinite good, a joyful satisfaction in his heavenly favour, and manifest nothing of this in his aspect and behaviour? That he should shew no serenity of countenance, no sweetness of temper, no inward joy; Is it possible that he should have an utter aversion to sin, a hatred of all iniquity in his heart, and not make it appear in his life? That he should maintain a holy contempt of this world, and scorn of it, in comparison of the future glories that his eye is fixed upon, so warm a zeal for God, and so hearty a love to men, and not manifest it to the world? Surely his life will be above, where his heart is; and his heart will be in heaven, where his treasures are. *Our conversation is in heaven, says the blessed Paul, under the influence of this religion and these hopes;* Phil. iii. 20, 21.

It is true indeed, this is a testimony that cannot be communicated to others, in the same measure and manner that it is felt by the persons that believe. In this respect it is like the hidden manna, which none knows but that they taste of it; yet those

that feed upon it daily, will discover it in some outward appearances; as you read of Jonathan, in the day when he was faint in pursuing his enemies, he tasted of the honey, and his eyes were enlightened; 1 *Sam.* xiv. 27. Just so will it be with the soul that hath tasted of the gospel of Christ, this food of eternal life; he will discover it in his language, in his behaviour; and it is a shame to those that profess to be believers, that in all things they look so much like the men of this world, and do not discover it in their lives, and witness what they have in their hearts, even the beginning of eternal life: If we are the the epistle of Christ, we shall be, in some measure, known and read of all men; 2 *Cor.* iii. 2, 3. Christianity in the soul, eternal life begun in the heart, will be like the sweet ointment of the right-hand, that bewrays itself, and cannot be hid; *Prov.* xxvii. 16. Ye christians, ye are the light of the earth, ye believers are the salt of the world; ye must not appear like others if you would be like yourselves; the honour of God your Saviour demands some sensible and important difference. Ye must not be too much like the world, if ye mean to give glory or evidence to the religion of Christ; *John* xv. 19. *Rom.* xii. 2.

III. Though this inward evidence of the truth of christianity be of a spiritual nature, and spring from pious experience, yet it is a very rational evidence also, and may be made out and justified to the strictest reason. It is no vain, fanciful, and enthusiastic business; for while every believer feels the argument working strong in his heart and soul, he finds also the convincing force of it upon his understanding: While he feels his inward powers sweetly inclined to virtue and holiness, which by nature had strong inclination to sensuality and sin, and knows that this was wrought in him purely by the gospel of Christ; he cannot but infer, that must be a divine principle which has such divine effects. He knows that he was once blind and dead in trespasses and sins, but now he is awake, and alive to God and to righteousness: he is born again, he dwells, as it were, in a new world, there is a mighty and surprizing change past upon him, even from death to life; and thence he concludes, by the justest rules of reasoning, that it must be a doctrine of divine wisdom and power, that gave him this blessed resurrection: It is above and beyond nature, it is a miracle of grace, and none but God could work it.

And this is what I call the inward witness of the Spirit of God to the truth of the gospel, at least in these latter ages of christianity. The outward and more visible testimony of the spirit consists in those sensible miracles that were wrought, and those wondrous gifts of healing, of tongues, &c. that were bestowed on the first christians; *Heb.* ii. 4. *Rom.* xv. 19. But the Spirit's inward testimony is the constant miracle of regeneration

and converting grace. This witness, in my opinion, has been dishonoured by too many protestants, when they have explained it merely by inward impulses, and vehement impressions upon the mind, without the conduct of reason. This has tempted the profane world to call our devout efforts of christian piety mere enthusiasm and wild imagination, the flashes of a kindled blood and vapours, that are puffed about with every wind: But when the testimony of the spirit is explained in the manner I have described, it must approve itself to all the sober and reasonable part of mankind.

Here let us stand still and consider, how great and divine a power was necessary to make this mighty change on the heart of a poor, ignorant, guilty, sinful creature, and establish him a saint in peace and purity. It is not every one that hears this same gospel, that obtains the same salvation, and that feels the same glorious change; and many a true christian must confess, how long they sat under the same ministry and instructions before their hearts were brought to love God, or renewed to an heavenly life; Thus their experience teaches them, there was an Almighty virtue and efficacy at last attended this gospel, which made it more powerful in one day, or week, or month, than it had been in whole years before. There was a quickening spirit, that accompanied the voice of the word, and gave them life, while the word called them to arise from the dead. And this is yet more gloriously evident, when such changes have been wrought on sinners in an hour or two: They went to hear the gospel, poor, lame, blind, senseless and thoughtless of God and eternity; and they were awakened, convinced of sin and of righteousness; they learnt their ruin and their recovery at once, through the atonement and grace of Christ: The poor came home enriched with various graces: the blind see wonders, and the lame return leaping and rejoicing in the hope of glory. This gives plain proof of a divine doctrine, and a divine attending spirit and power.

It is the blessed Spirit of God, who dictated these divine truths of the gospel, that accompanies them with his own power to the minds and consciences of those who hear the gospel preached, and by his own power works this glorious change in the hearts and lives of sinners: It is through the sanctification of the spirit, and the belief of the truth, that sinners are called by the gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ; 2 *Thess.* ii. 13, 14. It is by the preaching of this gospel, attended with this spirit, that the fornicators and adulterers become chaste, the thieves and extortioners are made honest and just, the covetous earth-worms become heavenly-minded, the drunkards are turned sober, and these heirs of hell are made fit to inherit the kingdom of God. The unclean are washed, the unholy are sanc-

tified, and the guilty justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God: 1 *Cor.* vi. 9, 10, 11. It is the blessed Spirit the Comforter, that speaks peace to the conscience of believers, through the atoning blood of Christ; it is he sheds abroad the love of God in their hearts, by believing the gospel; *Rom.* v. 5. and it is he that fills them with love to God and to their neighbour; for this love is the fruit of the Spirit; *Gal.* v. 22. and when the Spirit of God shines upon his own work in the soul of man, and makes this glorious change appear to the self-examining christian, it is a noble testimony that it gives to the truth and divinity of the gospel of Christ.

IV. This witness to the truth of christianity is certain and infallible, in the nature and reason of things; and where this divine life arises to a considerable height, it gives a full assurance to the christian, that his religion is true. Eternal life begun in the soul, according to the description of it, cannot rise from a *false* doctrine; it must proceed from the God of truth, who himself is *eternal life;* 1 *John* v. 20. and the original and spring of it to all his happy creatures. If it were possible that any other doctrine or religion could work such an inward witness in the hearts of sinners; if it were possible that any mere human gospel could give such a life and happiness as I have described, God would never have appointed his own divine gospel such a doubtful witness. But I may say, God will never suffer so divine a testimony to belong to any religion, but that which himself hath revealed; and in our day it can belong to none but the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. If false religions could have this witness, could work this eternal life in sinners, we could hardly ever have sufficient rules to judge of the true religion by. Rejoice then ye that have found this witness in your souls, that have eternal life begun in you; seek after no other way to heaven. Be not drawn aside from the truth, but be stedfast. Ye cannot find such another doctrine among men; ye cannot find another religion that can offer such testimonies as this. It is then a convincing, an infallible witness; such a new and heavenly life wrought in the heart, is a sure proof that the doctrine comes from God.

V. It is a strong and powerful witness, and ever ready at hand to baffle the most learned sophisms, and the boldest temptations. It lies so near, and is always at hand, that it is a present shield against every flying arrow from the camp of infidelity. It is an argument drawn from sense and vital experience, and it effectually answers all the subtle cavils of false reasoning. Suppose a crafty philosopher should pretend to prove, that bread is not wholesome, that water is useless to allay thirst, or wine is mere poison: I may boldly maintain the wholesomeness, and the happy use of bread, water, and wine; for I am daily nourished by this bread

my thirst has been perpetually quenched by water, and I have often found and felt this wine refresh me. The quibbles of logic, against the sense and experience of a true christian, are but as darts of straw and stubble against the scales of a leviathan.

When *the Greeks, who seek after learning*, say to a christian, "How can this gospel be true and divine, which is so plain and simple in itself, which was preached by a parcel of fishermen, and invented by a carpenter, and his followers that published it had no more learning than he? How is it possible such a religion should be from God, that hath so much of unlearned simplicity in it?" But the christian can tell them, that all the wisdom and learning of the philosopher could never do such miracles as this gospel has done, could never work such a divine life and temper in my heart.

When the Jews shall say, "How can this be the Messiah? For the Messiah, the Son of God, must be a great King, the Governor of the earth, must deliver the Jews from their slavery, must have power over all the nations; how could this be the Messiah, that was crucified among his countrymen, and we, with our fellow-citizens, joined together to put him to death, and he lay like a mere mortal in his grave? How can this be the Saviour, or can his religion be true?" The christian, that is called of God, and has found the witness in himself, makes answer, *he that was foolishness to the Greeks, and a scandal to the Jews, is the wisdom of God, and the power of God to me.* I have seen my *sins nailed to the cross* of this Redeemer; I have found a way for the pardon of all my iniquities, and the satisfaction of my conscience (which was before full of anguish) in and from the cross of this Messiah; I have found holiness wrought in my soul by the belief of this gospel; I have felt such virtue proceeding from this Saviour, that I, who was before all over unclean and defiled, am in some degree made holy: This gospel therefore must be from God, and this is the Messiah, his Son.

When the deists of our age shall object and say, "How can ye believe such a religion to be divine, that is delivered in so poor and mean a way, as the story of Christ, and all the strange doctrines of your gospel? How can the bible be the word of God? Not only because there are so many obscurities and mystical speeches in it, that a learned man in our day would be ashamed to write it? How can this gospel be the revelation of God, that wants so much of the beauty of oratory and strong reasoning, which the wisdom of man pretends to, and daily performs?" But the christian answers; The gospel, that is contained here, must be from God: For although it has so much human weakness in our eyes, I have felt a divine power attending it, it hath been to me the power of God unto salvation. Let it want therefore what human ornaments it will, if it has a divine efficacy in it, I am sure

it is from above." Thus whatsoever temptations are proposed to baffle his faith, and to stagger his belief of the doctrine of Christ, this one instance of its divinity, keeps the believer steady: "I have found it of efficacy to begin eternal life in me, therefore I know it is from God."

But as to this sort of objections, against the truth and divinity of our religion, arising from the doubtful or difficult evidence of the books of scripture, we may fetch a noble answer from the experimental testimony of which I am now speaking: And this shall be the sixth property of this inward witness.

VI. It is such a witness to the truth of the christian religion, as does not depend on the exact truth of letters and syllables, nor on the critical knowledge of the copies of the bible, nor on this old manuscript, or on the other new translation: For how great soever the difference may be between the various ancient copies of the books of scripture, or the elder or later translations of it, either in protestant or popish countries; yet the substance of christianity is so scattered through all the New Testament, and especially among the epistles, that every manuscript and every translation has enough of the gospel to save souls by it, and make a man a christian indeed. How full of noise and controversy has the christian world been, especially in the learned ages of it, in order to adjust and settle the true books of scripture, the true verses, and the true reading? How many doubtful words have crept into some of the written copies by the mistakes of transcribers? And how exceeding hard, if not impossible, is it in many cases to judge which was the true and authentic word or sentence? But the humble and sincere christian has learned so much of the same gospel, in which all copies agree, as has renewed his sinful nature, and wrought a divine life in him, and therefore he is sure the substance of this gospel must be from God. Nay, if this property of the inward witness be duly considered a little further in the nature and attendants of it, we shall find that every true christian has a sufficient argument and evidence to support his faith, without being able to prove the authority of any of the canonical writings. He may hold fast his religion, and be assured that it is divine, though he cannot bring any learned proof that the book that contains it is divine too; nay, though the book itself should ever happen to be lost or destroyed: And this will appear with open and easy conviction, by asking a few such questions as these:

Was not this same gospel preached with glorious success before the new testament was written? Were not these same doctrines of salvation by Jesus Christ published to the world by the ministry of the apostles, and made effectual to convert thousands, before they set themselves to commit these doctrines to

writing? And had not every sincere believer, every true convert, this blessed witness in himself, that christianity was from God? Eight or ten years had past away, after the ascension of Christ, before any part of the New Testament was written, (as learned men conceive) and what unknown multitudes of christian converts were born again by the preaching of the word, and raised to a divine and heavenly life, long ere this book was half finished or known, and that among heathens as well as Jews? And though the scriptures of the Old Testament might prepare the minds of some of these to receive the gospel; yet we have reason to believe, that great numbers, especially of the Gentile world, were convinced by miracles and tongues, and some, perhaps by mere narratives and exhortations, and became holy believers; each of them *the epistle of Christ written in the heart*, and bearing about within them a noble and convincing proof that this religion was divine, and that without a written gospel, without epistles, and without a bible.

Again, In the first ages of Christianity, for several hundred years together, how few among the common people were able to read? How few could get the possession of the use of a bible, when all sacred as well as profane books must be copied by writing? How few of the populace, in a large town or city, could obtain or could use any small part of scripture, before the art of printing made the word of God so common? And yet millions of them were regenerated, sanctified, and saved by the ministration of this gospel. The sum, and sense, and substance of this divine doctrine, communicated to the nations in various forms of speech, and in different phrases, made a divine impression on their minds, being attended by the power of the blessed Spirit; and while it stamped its own sacred image on their souls, it transformed their natures into holy and heavenly, and created so many new witnesses to the truth of the gospel, for it begun eternal life in them.

Consider then, christians, and be convinced, that the gospel has a more noble inward witness belonging to it, than is derived from *ink and paper*, from precise letters and syllables: And though God, in his great wisdom and goodness, saw it necessary that the New Testament should be written, to preserve these holy doctrines uncorrupted through all ages; and though he was pleased to appoint the written word to be the invariable and authentic rule of our faith and practice, and make it a glorious instrument of instructing ministers and people to salvation in all these later times: Yet christianity has a secret witness in the hearts of believers, that does not depend on their knowledge and proof of the authority of the scriptures, nor of any of the controversies that

in late ages have attended the several manuscript copies, an different readings and translations of the bible.

Now this is of admirable use and importance in the christia life, upon several accounts: As,

1. If we consider how few poor unlearned christians the are, who are capable of taking in the arguments which are ne cessary to prove the divine authority of the sacred writings; an few, even among the learned, can well adjust and determi many of the different readings, or different translations of part cular scriptures. Now a wise christian does not build his fai and hope merely upon any one or two single texts, but upon t general scope, sum, and substance of the gospel, the great do trines of the satisfaction for sin, by the blood of Christ, and t renewal of our corrupt natures by the Holy Spirit, the necessi of faith in Christ, repentance of sin, and sincere holiness, in ord to salvation and heavenly glory; and by these he feels a spiritu life of peace and piety begun in him: And here lies his eviden that christianity is divine, and that these doctrines are from he ven, though a text or two may be written false, or wrong tran lated, or though a whole book or two may be hard to be prov authentic.

The learned well know what need there is of turning ov the histories of ancient times, of the traditions and writings of t fathers, and authors, pious and profane; what need of critic skill in the holy languages, and in ancient manuscripts; what wide survey of various circumstances of fact, time, place, styl language, &c. is necessary to confirm one or another book verse of the New Testament, and to answer the doubts of t scrupulous, and the bold objections of the infidel; what laborio reasonings are requisite to found our faith on this bottom. No how few of the common rank of christians, whose hearts are inla with true faith in the Son of God, and real holiness, have leisur books, instructions, advantages, and judgment to make a thoroug search into these matters, and to determine, upon a just view argument, that these books were written by the sacred autho whose names they bear, and that these authors were under an in mediate inspiration in writing them? What a glorious advar tage is it then to have such an infallible testimony to the truth the gospel wrought and written in the heart by renewing grac as does not depend on this laborious, learned, and argumentati evidence of the divine authority of the bible, or of any particul book or verse of it?

2. If we consider what bold assaults are sometimes ma upon the faith of the unlearned christian, by the deists a unbelievers of our age, by disputing against the authority of t scripture, by ridiculing the strange narratives and sublime do

trines of the bible, by setting the seeming contradictions in a blasphemous light, and then demanding, "How can you prove, or how can you believe, that this book is the word of God, or that the religion it teaches is divine?" In such an hour of contest, how happy is the christian that can say, "Though I am not able to solve all the difficulties in the bible, nor maintain the sacred authority of it against the cavils of wit and learning; yet I am well assured that the doctrines of this book are sacred, and the authority of them divine: For when I heard and received them, they changed my nature, they subdued my sinful appetites, they made a new creature of me, and raised me from death to life; they made me love God above all things, and gave me the lively and well-grounded hope of his love: Therefore I cannot doubt but that the chief principles of this book are heavenly and divine, though I cannot so well prove that the very words and syllables of it are so too; for it is the sense of scripture, and not the mere letters of it, on which I build my hope." I might say yet further,

3. This inward witness gives great support in hours of darkness and temptations of the devil, when such sudden thoughts shall be thrown into the mind even of a learned christian: "What if the scripture should not be divine? What if this gospel and the other epistle should not be written by inspiration? What if these should be merely the words of men, and not the very word of God?" The believer, who feels a renewed nature, and a divine life working within him, can boldly repel these fiery darts of Satan, with such a reply as this: "Though I cannot at present recollect all the arguments that prove Matthew, Mark, and Luke, to be divine historians, or Peter and Paul to be inspired writers; yet the substance and chief sense of their gospels, and their epistles must needs be divine, and God is the author of it, for it has begun the spiritual and eternal life in my soul; and this is my witness (or rather the witness of the Spirit of God within me) that Christ *is the Son of God, the Saviour of sinners*, and the religion that I profess and practice is safe and divine."

And though there are many and sufficient arguments drawn from criticism, history, and human learning, to prove the sacred authority of the bible, and such as may give abundant evidence to an honest enquirer, and full satisfaction that it is the word of God; yet this is the chief evidence that the greatest part of christians can ever attain of the divine original of the holy scripture itself, as well as the truth of the doctrines contained in it, *viz.* That they have found such a holy and heavenly change passed upon them by reading or hearing the propositions, the histories,

the promises, the precepts, and the threatenings of this book: And thence they are wont to infer, that the God of truth would not attend a book, which was not agreeable to his mind, with such glorious instances of his own power and grace. Though it must be still confessed, that this argument is much stronger, and the evidence brighter for the general truth of christianity, than it can possibly be for the sacred authority of any one verse or chapter of the New Testament.

I have dwelt the longer on this sixth property of the inward witness, because I think it of great importance in our age, which has taken so many steps towards heathenism and infidelity: for this argument or evidence will defend a christian in the profession of the true religion, though he may not have skill enough to defend his bible.

[This sermon may be divided here, if it be too long.]

VII. This is an universal witness to the truth of the gospel; for it belongs to every true christian. The weak, as well as the strong, enjoy this inward evidence in some measure and degree. This is an argument of some force and conviction to him, who is but young in grace and knowledge, as well as to him that has made high advances in the faith, and is grown up to the stature of man in *Christ*. Though it must be acknowledged that where faith and love, holiness and peace are weak, the evidence of this testimony is weak also; yet it may sometimes stand firm and strong, and shine bright in those christians, whose intellectual powers are but mean and low. Some persons of great holiness, may have but little natural parts, poor understandings, a mean education, and can scarce give any clear rational account of the things of this world, or of that which is to come; and these enjoy a great degree of this inward witness to the truth of christianity, that a divine life is begun in them, and that the gospel has effectually wrought in them *a new nature; those great and precious promises of the gospel having made them partakers of the divine nature*, they are sure those promises must be divine, 2 *Pet.* i. 4. and 1 *Cor.* i. 22, 23. *Not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble are called; but God hath chosen the poor, and the weak, and foolish things of this world, to confound the wise and the mighty:* Nor yet hath he chosen, or called one of them, without giving them a sufficient witness to the truth of that gospel, by and to which they are called. Though they cannot argue for the doctrine of *Christ*, yet they find *Christ dwelling within them the hope of glory*; Col. i. 27. They find the characters of *Christ* copied out in their hearts, and the life of *Christ* in some measure, transcribed in their lives. They find something of sacred influence from the gospel of Christ, which no other doctrines can pretend to; therefore though they cannot give a rational account,

which shall answer all the cavils of men; why they believe christianity, through the weakness of their knowledge, yet their faith in Christ is strong; for they are sure the doctrine is divine, because of the sweet and sanctifying influence it has upon them. How condescending is God to poor sinners, to give such a religion to be saved by, that every one who receives it shall have an infallible witness in himself of the truth of it, without the learning of the schools, and the knowledge of tongues! Their chief argument for it is, they have divine holiness, and divine peace.

VIII. This inward witness of the truth of christianity, is, or should be, always growing and improving. The testimony increases as the divine love increases; the greater the degree of of holiness we arrive at, the more are we confirmed in the truth of christianity the testimony grows stronger, 2 *Cor.* iii. 18. You find that text approves of what I have now argued. When the apostle had been distinguishing between the religion of the law, and that of the gospel; that the one was covered with a veil, but under the other this veil was taken away: We, says he, under the gospel, *with open face beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory. We who behold the face of Christ Jesus* in his gospel, we who here see a God reconciled in and by the death of his Son, we who see the holiness of Christ here described, copied, and exemplified, *we are changed into the same image.* The image of Christ is transcribed upon our natures, we go on from one degree of it to another; we are changed *from glory to glory,* from one degree of glorious holiness to another: thereby the gospel appears to have a fairer, a brighter, and a stronger evidence.

Thence it comes to pass, that when christians have grown to a good degree of strength in faith, and great measures of holiness in this world, all the temptations that they meet with to turn them aside from the doctrines of Christ, *are esteemed but as straw and stubble;* they cannot move nor stir them from the faith that is in Jesus, because the evidence hath grown strong with years: and as they have attended long upon the ministration of this gospel, they have found more and more of this eternal life wrought in their hearts; they have got nearer to heaven, they have pressed on continually towards perfection, they have found sweet assurance of the pardon of sin in their conscience, and diviner sensations of the love of God communicated to them, and their own love both to God and man increasing; they have found their hearts more averse to all iniquity, they have felt themselves rising higher and higher above this world, as they have come nearer to the end of their days; and a holy contempt of this world has grown

bolder: They take greater delight in God, and more gustf satisfaction in his worship, and in his company: Their zeal f his honour is warmer and stronger; they are perpetually emplo ing themselves in contrivances for the glory of God amo men. Thus in every part of this spiritual life the testimo increases, the evidence grows brighter, as eternal life advan in them.

In the last place: As it is a growing witness, so it is such one as never can be utterly lost; and that character of it is de ved from the very name, for it is *eternal life*. Where it is on wrought in the soul, it shall be everlasting, it shall never di *The seed of God abides in those that are born of God;* 1 John i 9. *for they are born not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptib even the word of God, which lives and abides forever;* 1 Pet. i. 2 His gospel, which is an *everlasting gospel*, continues that heave ly work in the soul, which that gospel did first begin. It m be darkened indeed, it may be hidden for a season; sometim the violent temptations of the evil one, may, as it were stop t mouth of this divine witness; and sometimes, defiling lusts risi upon the face of the soul, may darken these evidences, but c never entirely blot them out. Eternal life must abide for ev according to the name and nature of it. Though the eviden for a season may be obscure, and may seem to be silent throu the power of iniquity, and the strength of temptation; yet t life will resume its activity, and discover itself, because its natu is eternal. It is Christ Jesus living in the soul by the power his own Spirit; Christ Jesus, who is the eternal principle of li and his Spirit, which is the eternal Spirit: and where he ha begun to dwell, he shall forever inhabit. This evidence sh continue to all eternity, and shall give many a sweet reflection the saints in heaven. "I feel now (says every saint there) th this was a true gospel I trusted in, in the days of my flesh; a this religion was divine, for it hath raised me to these mansio of blessedness. I feel now it was a doctrine came down fr heaven, and that Christ Jesus was not an imposter, but *the S of God* indeed, for he has brought me to his Father's house this doctrine; he has seated me upon his own throne, even as is seated upon the throne of his Father: he hath made me overcomer by believing this doctrine, even as he himself has ove come." Eternal life itself, in the perfection of it in the futu world, shall be a standing and everlasting evidence of the tru of the gospel.

I will now endeavour to draw some few inferences or remar from the discourse, and then conclude.

1. The first remark is very obvious, how glorious is the g pel of our Lord! How preferable to all other religions! Th

which men have invented, are not to come into competition with it; let none of them be named. Even that religion which God himself invented, the religion of the Jews, had not such honourable characters belonging to it, as this of our Saviour hath. Many expressions that are used in the epistles of St. Paul, to shew the superiority of the gospel above the law, are such as give it an infinite advantage and preference: As in point of glory, so in point of evidence too. One was *the letter*; the other is *the spirit*; one was *the ministration of condemnation*, the other of salvation; one *the ministration of death*, the other of life: and as life, spiritual or eternal life, is represented as the peculiar effect and prerogative of the gospel, so it carries more light of evidence with it to confirm its heavenly original; it brings the believing soul much nearer to heaven.

The Jewish religion instituted by Moses, although, by the accompanying power of the Spirit of God, *it wrought effectually*, in the hearts of those that sincerely received it, and changed their natures in a saving manner; yet the brightness and glory of this sort of evidence, that belonged to that religion was derived from the gospel, which was hidden under the types of it: Nor could it be supposed to have equal brightness or force with the gospel itself, when unveiled, and shining in open light; as I have shewn in the second discourse.

The Jews, when they had offered all their sacrifices for the hope of pardon of their sins, and looked as far as they could look through the smoke and shadows, to see the Messiah at a distance, could never have their consciences so sweetly released from fears, and the sense of guilt, as christians under the gospel, may enjoy through the blood of Christ: never had they so much communion with God in love, as since it is manifested by Christ Jesus, the Son of his love, that came *from his bosom*. Never were they raised so high above the world, nor could any of the Jews be so high refined in their hopes and joys, and exult in the view of heavenly glories, as a christian may be, and do, since the veil is withdrawn, and *life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel*: 2 Tim. i. 10. Never could they triumph over all the terrors of death, and the horror and darkness of the grave, as St. Paul the christian often does, and teaches his fellow-saints the same triumphal song; 1 Cor. xv. 54, &c. I grant that a single person or two like David, might now and then, by the spirit of rapture and prophecy, be borne far above that dispensation itself, and might have noble views and joys; but the whole church, under that state had but dark apprehensions of things above this life, and beyond death; their spiritual things were so much mingled and interwoven with a worldly dispensation, and their sanctuary itself called *a worldly sanctuary*. So much carnality

entered into the scheme of their constitution, that they could not be raised so high above this world, and the things of this life, as christians under the gospel: they could never have such a sense of forgiving grace, nor so sweet a satisfaction in drawing near to God, as christians now have; nor were they so expressly commanded, nor could, nor did they so gloriously practise the duties of love and forgiveness to men, as the christian religion requires, and works in the hearts of sincere believers.

2d remark. You learn here an excellent rule for self-examination, whether you have true faith or no. If you have, it will be accompanied with this evidence: for this eternal life begun in the soul, does not merely prove that christianity is a true doctrine, but it proves also that the faith of that person is true, where this eternal life is begun. This is mentioned in the foregoing sermon, therefore I shall pass it over briefly. The apostle asserts this sufficiently, ver. 13. *These things have I written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life.* The duties of morality, both of the first and second table, will be written upon the heart, and will, in some degree, be practised in the life, where the gospel is written in the heart, and where christianity is wrought in its power in the soul. But, on the other hand, those who neglect the duties of the first table, or indulge themselves in a very careless performance of them; those who pass by the duties of the second table, and those relative engagements which they lie under to their neighbour by the law of God, can never have the evidence within themselves, neither of the truth of christianity, nor of the truth of their own faith: They may be heathens, they may be heroes, they may be philosophers, they may be any thing but christians.

3d remark. Learn the true method of confirming your souls in the christian faith: seek daily greater degrees of this divine life wrought in you. This advice is also hinted by the apostle John, in the 13th verse, *I have written these things to you* concerning the witness of christianity, that consists in having *eternal life* begun in you, not only that ye may know ye have have it, but that ye may go on to *believe on the name of the Son of God.* We have need in our day to be well seasoned with arguments against the dangers of the times, and the temptations of the age in which we dwell. Christianity begins to be a stumbling-block, and the doctrine of the gospel is called folly; it is reproached to a very great and shameful degree, in a nation, which in public professes christianity. When we therefore shall be attacked with arguments to baffle our faith, and when the *wind of false doctrine* shall grow strong, and shall carry away many; how shall we be able to stand our ground, and hold fast our faith in Christ, if we have

not this inward witness, the beginnings of eternal life? Therefore it is that so many christians waver and are led away, sometimes to this new doctrine, sometimes to another, because they feel so little of the efficacy and power of the gospel in their hearts, so very little of holiness and eternal life within them.

If you cannot argue for the gospel with learning, nor from experience, what will ye do in an hour of temptation? For the most part, christians are too little bred up to those methods of knowledge, whereby they might be capable of giving large, and rational, and satisfactory answers to those that may set themselves to oppose the truth and progress of the gospel. What will you do in the darkness of such a temptation, when those that are learned and ingenious shall attack your faith, and say, "Why do you believe in Jesus?" If you have this answer ready at hand, "I have found the efficacy and power of the gospel on my heart;" this will be sufficient to answer all their cavils. It was one way whereby christianity was confirmed in the hearts of the martyrs of old, and whereby they were enabled to bear up against all oppositions, because they found such a divine efficacy attending the gospel, such a new and heavenly life wrought in them, as enabled them to go through great hardships for the sake of Christ. But this leads me to,

4. The fourth remark, *viz.* If there be this inward evidence belonging to the gospel, and those that truly believe, then you have a strong encouragement to profess christianity under the greatest persecutions. It will bear you out, it carries its own evidence with it; christianity in the heart will give courage against temptation. *Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial*, says the apostle Peter, for in such a fiery trial the gospel hath secured thousands; therefore, says St. Paul, though I meet with reproaches wheresoever I go, *though bonds and imprisonments await me*, and death itself; *Acts* xx. 23. *yet I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ*; Rom. i. 16. *for it is the power of God to salvation, to every one that believeth.* Which is but the sense of my text in other words. Every one that believes it in truth, hath this evidence in *himself, even eternal life: Therefore I count not my life dear to me, &c.* for the gospel will bear me out in my profession of it, in my publication of it, and in my suffering for it. This is the way we shall learn *to resist unto blood*, and seal the truth of this gospel with our mortal lives, if we have the seal of this truth abiding in our souls.

5th remark. As from this doctrine you have strong encouragement to profess christianity, so you are here taught the best way to honour the gospel, and to propagate the christian religion in the world. Make this inward divine testimony appear to the

world; let the eternal life that is wrought in your souls by this gospel, express itself in all your outward behaviour amongst men. Thus the primitive christians did, and it was their work to propagate the faith of Christ this way. The gentiles and unbelievers were *won by their conversation*; 1 Pet. iii. 1. Thus the apostles did, who were as so many captains and officers in the army of christians, going before the camp, and making war against all the idolatry of the heathens. They made that eternal life which was wrought in their souls, appear publicly, and discover itself unto men, and hereby the gospel gained victory and triumph wheresoever it went. When those who were ignorant of faith and its power, came into the assemblies of christians, and found the gospel to be a doctrine of such divine attendants, it convinced their consciences, and changed many of them into new creatures; they fell down, and confessed that *there is a God among the christians of a truth.* When they see *your conversation*, when they behold your faith, and holy fear, your zeal for God, your delight in his worship, your *gentleness*, your *meekness*, *kindness*, and *goodness* toward your fellow-creatures, your desire of the salvation of men, and readiness to deny yourselves for their good; when the heathens know and behold this, they shall be won, says the apostle, by such a conversation as this is, to the belief of the same doctrine, and practice of the same duties.

O what unknown millions of arguments would support and adorn the doctrine of Christ, if every professor of it had this inward testimony working powerfully in the soul, and breaking forth in the life! How effectually would it silence the most impudent objectors! When they shall put that question to you, "*What do you more than others?*" You would make it appear in your lives, that the gospel is true and divine, by challenging all the philosophers, and all the priests and devotees of other religions, to shew such men and women as christians are; such husbands and wives, such parents and children, such masters and servants. such lovers of God and man. O how happy would it be for the christian name and interest in the world, if those who profess the gospel of Christ, could make a bold and universal challenge upon this head! Or when the deists shall insult and say to a believer, What is Jesus of Nazareth *more than another* man, that you love and adore him so? Or in the language of the carnal Jews, *What is thy beloved more than another beloved*, that thou makest so much ado about him? The discovery of Christ reigning in the soul by his renewing grace, will be a sufficient evidence that he is the Son of God, that his character and his person are divine, and his mission is from above; that he is the *chiefest of ten thousand*, and *altogether lovely.*

It is worth while for us now to take a survey of ourselves, to

look back upon our lives, and ask, "What testimonies have we given to the glory of this gospel, and to the truth of the religion of Christ? Have we not sometimes rather been scandals to christianity? Have not our practices been blots instead of evidences, and discouragements to the unbeliever, intead of allurements? Have we not sometimes laid *stumbling-blocks* in the way of those that have had the look of an eye, and some tendency of heart towards it?" This will be an awakening thought, and painful to conscience in the review.

Have we not much reason to mourn that there are some among us *who walk as enemies of the cross of Christ?* Phil. iii. 17. I would have you, says the apostle, *be followers of me*, walk as I walk, *as you have me for an example.* I would have you walk as those who have eternal life begun in them, that you may be honours to the gospel. *But there are many who walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, they are enemies of the cross*, and dishonours to the gospel, instead of evidences of the truth of it; their *end is destruction, their god is their belly, and their glory is in their shame*; whereas *our conversation is in heaven, whence we expect Jesus the Saviour;* 18, 19, 20. We who are here upon earth, and have believed the gospel of Christ, we should live as though we had part of ourselves in heaven already, our conversation should be so holy and divine. Eternal life begun in our hearts, should break out, and disclose itself, and shine bright among the persons we converse with. O! how much is the propagation of the gospel obstructed, how much the honour of our Lord Jesus Christ obscured, and how much the good of souls prevented and hindered by those that discover not this eternal life, this sacred witness, in the holiness of heart and practice! *But, beloved, we hope better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak;* Heb. vi. 9. and yet we must speak thus, with a sacred jealousy for the glory and evidence of this gospel, with a warm concern for the peace and welfare of your souls, and with holy zeal for the conversion of the unbelieving world to the faith of God our Saviour.

DIVINE HYMNS FOR SERMONS I, II, AND III.

The Inward Witness to Christianity.

Long Metre.

QUESTIONS and doubts be heard no more :
Let Christ and joy be all our theme ;
His Spirit seals his gospel sure
To every soul that trusts his name.

Jesus, thy witness speaks within ;
The mercy which thy words reveal,
Refines the heart from sense and sin,
And stamps its own celestial seal.

'Tis God's inimitable hand
That moulds and forms the heart anew ;
Blasphemers can no more withstand,
But bow and own thy doctrine true.

The guilty wretch that trusts thy blood
Finds peace and pardon at the cross ;
The sinful soul averse to God,
Believes and loves his Maker's laws.

Learning and wit may cease their strife
When miracles with glory shine ;
The voice that calls the dead to life,
Must be almighty and divine.

Common Metre.

WITNESS, ye saints, that Christ is true ;
Tell how his name imparts
The life of grace and glory too :
Ye have it in your hearts.

The heav'nly building is begun
When ye receive the Lord ;
His hands shall lay the crowning stone,
And well perform his word.

Your souls are form'd by wisdom's rules,
Your joys and graces shine ;
You need no learning of the schools,
To prove your faith divine.

Let heathens scoff, and Jews oppose,
Let Satan's bolts be hurl'd ;
There's something wrought within you shews
That Jesus saves the world.

SERMON IV.

Flesh and Spirit; or, the Principles of Sin and Holiness.

Rom. viii. 1.——Who walk not after the Flesh, but after the Spirit.

WHEN we use the words flesh and spirit, in their literal and proper sense, all men know what we mean by them: Flesh generally signifies the animal nature; that is, the body and blood, &c. and spirit means an intelligent nature that has understanding and will. When these are attributed to man, they are but other names to express those two distinct beings, the body and soul, that make up human nature. But these words are often in scripture used metaphorically, and that in various senses; yet the metaphor, as it stands in my text, hath such justness and propriety in it, that the sense of it is not very difficult to be traced, being happily and nearly derived from the proper and literal meaning. It is plain that St. Paul uses this expression of *walking after the flesh*, to signify a course of sin; and by *walking after the spirit*, he describes a course of holiness. This is the character of such as believe in Christ, and to whom belongs no condemnation, *that they walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit;* they live not in a course of sin, nor according to sinful principles, but follow the principles of holiness that are wrought in them.

Thus the word flesh signifies, and includes all the principles and springs of sin that are found in man, whether they have their immediate and distinct residence in the body or in the soul. The word spirit signifies and includes all the principles of holiness that are wrought in any person, whether immediately residing in soul or body. And among the many places of scripture where they are so used, those words of our Lord himself to Nicodemus, *John* iii. 6. seem to make this most evident: *What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the spirit is spirit;* by which he means to assert, that what comes by natural generation tends towards sin, and what is derived from the operation of the Spirit of God leads to holiness. Or, more plainly thus: all the principles of sin spring from mere human nature, as derived from our parents, and are called flesh; and, on the contrary, all the principles of holiness spring from the Spirit of God, and are called spirit; and thence his argument derives the necessity of being *born again*, or born from above. In the first part of these two sentences, flesh and spirit are taken literally for the flesh of man,

and the Spirit of God. In the latter end of the sentences, flesh and spirit must be taken figuratively, for the principles of sin, and the principles of holiness.

Now since the apostle frequently uses the terms flesh and spirit in the same sense which his Lord and Master put upon them, and talks often on this subject: I shall spend this discourse in shewing the grounds of this figure of speech in my text, and in giving a full explication and improvement of it in the following manner:

I. I shall offer some reasons why sin, and the principles of it, are represented by the flesh.—II. I shall likewise propose the reasons why the principles of holiness are expressed by the term spirit. And,—III. Draw some useful remarks from the whole.

First, Let me shew why sin is represented by flesh, so often in scripture; and I give these reasons for it:

I. Because fleshly or sensible objects, are the chief delight and aim of sinners. They pursue them, and they rejoice in them; and these lead away the soul from God to sin. It is the great business of sinners to *fulfil the lusts of the flesh, and make provision for it*. This is their character in St. Paul's writings; to gratify the appetites of the body, to provide for the desires of their animal natures, eating and drinking, and luxury, and lusts of the flesh, are the cares of most unregenerate men. *The lust of the eye*, and the gaities of life, gold and silver, pomp and equipage, a fine house, a gay appearance in the world, gaudy cloathing and glittering ornaments of the body, great splendor in the eyes of men; these are the idols, the gods of sinners; and they are the temptations of the saints too. The things that relate to the flesh, and the enjoyments of this sensible and present life, are the objects of sinful appetites, or of lawful appetite in a sinful degree; and therefore sin is called flesh.

II. Sin is also called flesh, because it is communicated and propagated to us by the parents of our flesh. It is by our flesh that we are a-kin to Adam, the first great sinner, and derive a corrupted nature from him; from this original taint we derive iniquity, as a polluted stream from an unclean fountain; he is the father of a sinful posterity.

Our spirits indeed are formed immediately by God, and being united to these bodies that come from Adam by the laws of creation, we become the children of Adam, and so are partakers of his sinful nature. How this is done, we may learn from other discourses: it is enough here to say, that irregular humours, and motions, and ferments are transferred and propagated from the first man, even from the same blood of which are formed all the nations of men that dwell upon the face of the earth; *Acts* xvii. 26. These are transmitted down to us the wretched posterity.

In some instances this is so evident, that all men see and believe it. How often does the haughty, the peevish, or the cholerie temper of the parent appear in the son or the daughter beyond all contradiction? And often, when we see a drunken or a wanton sinner, we cry, "He is the express copy of his father, he borrows his vices as well as his features, and seems to be his perfect image." And though it is not so evident in all men, that they borrow the seeds of iniquity from their predecessors, yet there is proof enough from the word of God, that we are *conceived in sin, and shapen in iniquity* that *man who is born of a woman* is neither clean nor righteous. *Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?* It is impossible; for *that which is born of the flesh is flesh;* Psalm li. 5. Job xv. 14. John iii. 6. Irregular tendencies towards lawful delights, and strong propensities towards unlawful ones, a neglect of God, and aversion to all that is holy or heavenly, with an inclination towards fleshly and sinful objects, are conveyed to us all, even from our first parents. Sinful Adam begat his sons *in his own likeness;* Gen. v. 3. and therefore sin is described by flesh, because it came from the father of our flesh.

III. Another reason why sin is called flesh, is because the chief springs of sin lie most in our fleshly natures; all the while we continue here in this world, the occasions of sin lie much in our body, in our blood, in our natural constitution, in this mortal frame and contexture; fancy and passion, in all their wild irregularities, are much influenced by the flesh and blood. Our bodily senses, our natural appetites, are continually tempting us away from our duty, and leading or enticing us to the commission of sin; or, at least, immediately falling in with temptation: insomuch that *sin* is said *to work in our members;* Rom. vii. 5. *to reign in our mortal body;* vi. 12. Sinful actions are called *the deeds of the body;* viii. 13. Our sins are called our members, *Col.* iii. 5. *Mortify by the spirit the deeds of the body,* saith the apostle in one place; *mortify your members which are upon the earth,* saith he in the other place; in both which he means the mortification of sin. He borrows words from the human body to describe sin.

Here let it be noted, that we do not suppose that mere flesh and blood, distinct from the soul, are capable of sin, properly speaking, or can become guilty in a proper sense; for these are but mere matter, and, separate from the mind, cannot be under a moral law, any more than brute creatures: Therefore we say, sin is not formally in the body of man, but it is occasionally there; because the senses and appetites, the parts and powers of the body become very often an unhappy occasion of sin to the soul; and upon this account the apostle often describes sin by the word flesh.

I proceed now to the second thing proposed, and that is, to

shew the grounds of this metaphorical use of the word spirit: And there are the same sorts of reasons to be given why this word is used to represent the principles of holiness, as there are why flesh should signify the principles of sin.

I. Because the objects and aim of holy souls are chiefly spiritual, *viz.* God and heaven, invisible and eternal things. Spiritual objects are chief in their esteem, most in their thoughts, and in their desires, and have the first place in their designs and pursuits: As *they that are after the flesh, mind the things of the flesh;* so *they that are after the spirit,* mind *the things of the spirit;* Rom. viii. 5. A saint, who is *spiritually-minded,* aims at those things that are more a-kin to the nature of a spirit; he seeks the knowledge of the favour of God, who is the supreme of Spirits, the infinite and self-sufficient Spirit, in whose knowledge, and in whose love, all intelligent creatures find a full sufficiency of blessedness. He knows that all created spirits who are holy and happy, are made so by derivations from God's all-sufficient holiness and happiness; and therefore he applies himself with zeal and vigour to all those spiritual exercises of meditation, faith and prayer, wherein God reveals himself and his mercy. The knowledge of God and his worship, of Christ and his gospel, of the Holy Spirit and his grace, is the chief desire of a holy soul. These are the objects of the pursuit of a spiritual man; he has devoted himself to God and things divine; upon account of which, a man is denominated holy, and therefore holiness is called spirit.

The holy man seeks the welfare of his own soul or spirit before that of his flesh; and while sinful men lay out their whole care and contrivance about the body, which must die, and grasp at the things of this life to make *provision for the flesh,* the saint is most concerned about his soul, which is an immortal spirit; he endeavours to rectify those disorders of it, which sin and the flesh have introduced, and is ever diligent to make provision for this soul of his in the spiritual and unseen world, because it must have a being there for ever. The holy man is most solicitous that his soul may be happy in an unknown hereafter, while the sinner seeks all his happiness here.

As the natural man neglects the two chief Spirits he has any concern with, that is, God and his own soul; so fleshly objects are his chief desire: But the spiritual man despises them all, in comparison of the unseen desirables of the spiritual world. The men of this world take pains to gratify their senses, and indulge every fleshly appetite among the entertainments of this present world; but those who are holy, mortify their sinful passions, and set their affections on things above; *Col.* iii. 1, &c. They look and aim at things that are unseen, that are eternal;

while the men of this world look only at the things that are visible and temporal; 2 *Cor.* iv. 18. The sinful many, or multitude of sinners, say, Who will shew us any good? But they seek it only among corn, wine, and oil, &c. The saint prays to his God, *Lord, lift upon me the light of thy countenance; and* this shall *put gladness into my heart more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased;* Ps. iv. 6, 7. This is the first reason holiness is described by the word spirit.

II. Holiness is represented by the spirit, because it is communicated to us by God the Father of our spirits, even as sin is conveyed down to us by the parents of our flesh. It is wrought in us by his blessed Spirit, whose character it is to be holy. In *Rom.* viii. 13, 14. you see holiness described as receiving its very nature and operation in us from the Spirit of God. As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God; and it is by the spirit we mortify the deeds of the flesh, or body, that so we may live. As they that are born of the flesh are flesh, so they that are born of the spirit are spirit: *John.* iii. 6. This is the language of our Lord Jesus Christ. They who have past through no renewing and reforming change of heart since their natural birth, they are still in a natural sinful state, and the principles of sin are prevalent in them: but they who have been thus changed and renewed by the blessed Spirit of God, have a new and spiritual natural principle and temper given to them, and are made holy. As by being born of man, we become the children of Adam, and gain a sinful nature; so by being born of God we become the sons of God, and gain a divine, a holy nature. We are born of God unto holiness, as we are born of flesh unto sin; 1 *John* iii. 9. *He that is born of God sinneth not;* that is, sin is not his nature and delight, nor his common and allowed practice. We are regenerated and new-created by the Spirit of God; *Titus* iii. 5. *Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but of his own mercy hath he saved us by regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit.*

III. Another reason why the principle of holiness is called spirit, is because the chief springs of holiness, and of opposition to sin, are found in the soul or spiritual part, as the springs and occasions of sin are chiefly seated in the flesh.

This is true both in saints and sinners, for even in sinners that have no renewing grace, there is the light of nature, as well as the knowledge of scripture in our nation; there are the powers of reason and conscience; and these judge concerning *vice* and *virtue*, that one is to be avoided, and the other practised; these inward and intellectual principles tell us, that sin is offensive to God our Maker; that it exposes us to his anger, and deserves terrible punishment; and by the exercise and influence of natural

reason, added to the knowledge of scripture, and by the inward stings, and sharp reproofs of natural conscience, many an evil motion of the flesh is suppressed, many an inordinate appetite and passion subdued, and many a grosser sin prevented. Now though all this is not properly called holiness, till the nature itself be renewed, the love of sin broken, and the love of God wrought in the heart; yet it is evident that those principles which resist sin, and have any distant tendencies toward holiness, lie chiefly in the mind or spirit.

This is yet more evident in a saint, a man that is regenerated and sanctified by grace: For though in such a person, the body as well as the spirit, may be in part sanctified; that is some of its irregular appetites may be much weakened and subdued; yet still I cannot help supposing that the spirit, or soul, has a greater share of sanctification than the flesh in this life. It is in the soul that the love of God is wrought by the Holy Spirit; it is the soul that repents of past sins, and watches against temptation; it is the soul that believes the gospel, and trusts in our Lord Jesus Christ: it is the soul that by faith takes a distant prospect of heaven and hell, and converses with invisible things beyond the reach and power of flesh and sense: It is by the powers of the soul enlightened and renewed, that we come to see the value and excellency of religion, and spiritual things above temporal; and are inclined to chuse God for our only happiness, and Jesus Christ *as the way to the Father.* The understanding and will are faculties of the soul, and the flesh has no part in their operations. The soul of a believer seems to be the more proper, immediate, and receptive subject of the sanctifying influences of the Spirit of God and this will appear by consulting the word of God, or the experiences of men.

The word of God leads us very naturally into this sentiment by its constant language. The apostle speaks indeed in one place of being *sanctified wholly*, and our *whole spirit, soul and body* being preserved *blameless, &c.* 1 Thess. v. 23. But he much oftner expresses sanctification by the *renewing of the mind*; Rom xii. 2. Renewing of the spirit of the mind; *Eph.* iv. 23. *Though the outward man*, or body, perish, *yet the inward man*, or spirit *is renewed day by day*; 2 Cor. iv. 16. And the constant language of the scripture calling sin flesh, and holiness spirit, in the saint intimates that there is more sin in the flesh, and more holiness in the spirit of one that is sanctified. Thus we read in St. Paul's discourse from the 16th *ver.* of *Romans* vii. to the 25th, where you find him all along distinguishing the flesh and the mind. By one of them he complains in a variety of expressions, that he is led away to sin, while the other of them approves and pursues after holiness; and though the words flesh and spirit are often used for

principles of sin and holiness, yet it may be remarked, that does not confine himself here to these terms, but uses the words body and members, to represent sin; inward and mind, when he points to the springs of holiness; which ld lead one very naturally to believe that there is more sanction in the mind or soul of a believer, and more of the occasion of sin remaining in his body or flesh.

We may find this also in a great measure from our own erience: We are tempted to many more sins by our various nal appetites and senses, than by the mere inclinations that ong to the mind, which are purely intellectual. There are eed the lusts or sinful desires of the mind, as well as *the lusts the flesh*; Eph. ii. 2. There is a sinful curiosity of the mind; h was part of the temptation of Eve, a desire to know evil as ll as good; there is a spiritual malice and envy against God l his saints: there is a spiritual pride of intellectual endowments, &c. and some of these are found too much in true christns, as well as in unbelievers; yet it must be acknowledged from stant observation, that the lusts of the flesh are much more quent, more numerous, and more powerful in the greatest part men; and it is manifest that acts of religion and holiness, and ercises of grace, begin more frequently in the inward inclinan of the spirit, distinguished from the flesh, as sin more frently begins in, and from the flesh itself, either in the outward inward parts and powers of it.

Surely if our souls were sanctified by divine grace, but so ch as many are in this world, and had no flesh about them, they uld not sin so much as they do. When we are engaged in the ercise of grace, or performance of spiritual duties, such as editation, prayer, delighting in God, rejoicing in Christ Jesus, should not be so soon weary of it, nor so immediately called away m it by the mere vanity or wandering of our minds, if we had fleshly objects about us, no outward senses, no inward treares of fancy, no appetites of the body to start up and mingle th our religion, to clog us in our sacred work, to make us grow ary under it, and draw us from it. How often must a saint y, "My soul is sincerely set against every sin, and I fear to end him whom my soul loveth; *with my mind I serve the w of God*, and I watch against every rising iniquity: But my tward senses, or the inward ferments of fleshly appetite or sion, surprize me before I am aware and defile my soul. Someses my spirit wrestles hard *with flesh and blood;* I summon all powers of reason and scripture, conscience and christianity; make a firm stand for a season, and maintain a brave and pain resistance; but the restless and perpetual assaults of fancy passion, at last over-power the feeble spirit, and I sinfully

submit and yield to the fretful or the luxurious humours of the body; and thus the brutal powers overcome the mind, and *I am led away captive to sin.* If I had not an eye, I had not been drawn away to the commission of this folly; if I had not an ear, I had not been tempted from God at such a season; if I had not such appetites or senses in exercise, I had been secured from many a snare; if I did not wear this flesh about me, which is so fond and tender of itself, and so impetuous and active in the pursuit of its own ease and satisfaction, I had not shrunk away at such a time from a dangerous duty; I had not been so fearful and cowardly at such a place in the profession of my faith, nor so often polluted my soul with sensualities, and made work for bitter repentance.

Thus the experience of christians, and the language of scripture concur in this point, That the occasions of sin evidently lie most in the flesh: and a contradiction or opposition to sin, proceeds more from the spirit.

It is true indeed, and must be confessed, that the soul being but in part sanctified, too often complies with these *motions of sin which work in our members*; and the affections of the soul itself, being not perfectly holy, are too easily induced to indulge the desires and passions of the flesh; and thereby sin is committed and guilt contracted. *The law* or principle, *of sin in the members*, leads the mind, too often, captive; *Rom.* vii. 23. Thus the soul is very culpable for want of perpetual resistance, and becomes

nswer to these questions, by making an inward enquiry to ourselves, according to the three descriptions of flesh and irit.

First, What are our chief aims and desires? Are they bent gratify the appetites of the flesh, and set upon sensual enjoyents? Or do we seek and pursue spiritual and eternal things, our most valuable and lovely portion? What is our chief easure? Where are our hearts and our hopes? Are they andering amongst heaps of gold and silver, roving over fair d large estates, entertaining themselves with gay cloathing, nours, and vanities? Or are they pointing upwards, and rected towards God, the first and best of beings; and fixed on e blessedness of the spiritual world. Is our chief concern *to ake provision for the flesh* and this life, or to secure an inheritce for our souls among the incorruptible glories of the upper orld? What is it that sits highest in our esteem, and awakens r warmest affections and brightest joys? Is it God or the eature, heaven or earth, things fleshly or invisible? Let conience be faithful, and answer to such inquiries.

Again, let us ask ourselves, have we nothing within us but hat was derived from nature and the flesh? or do we find rselves enriched with divine graces by the influence of the oly Spirit? Are we the same sort of creatures that we were rn? or have we had a mighty change wrought in us, so that e can find in ourselves that we *are born again*, born of the spirit? ave we new love and new hatred, new designs and pursuits, new ys and sorrows? or are the affections of our souls the same that e brought into the world with us, and engaged chiefly about the airs of this body, and this temporal life?

Let us enquire, in the third place whether there be any pposition made by our spirits against fleshly passions and appetes? Let every one of us ask our souls, What inward conflict o I find in myself? Do I comply with all the sinful tendencies f fleshly nature, or do I maintain a continual resistance? Is ere a combat, and, as it were, a duel within me, when temptaons present themselves? or am I easily led away, and yield to a naturally, without any reluctance? Do I find my flesh and pirit at war within me, when any sensual allurements appear? or o I yield up all my powers as *servants to sin*, and comply with e lusts of the flesh, with a hearty delight? Am I like a dead sh carried down with the stream of my appetites and passions, nd make no pretences to oppose the vicious current? If, upon is enquiry, I find that the flesh is sovereign, and the spirit never pposes it, I may pronounce myself then to be in the flesh, in the ost significant and complete manner: then I have nothing but esh in me, and my soul is, as it were, carnalized, and deep nmersed in the fleshly life.

I confess there may be some sort of opposition made to fleshl lusts, where there is no renewed nature, no saving grace, n true principle of holiness, such as is described by the spirit in m text. Many a youth resists his inclination to a drinking hour, o unclean iniquities, by the mere force of his education, by th awful regard he has to his parents, by a fear of injury to hi health, or of public shame or scandal. Many a wicked ma refuses to comply with his corrupt appetites, because he cann bear the anguish of his own conscience, and the sharp reproach of his reason and better judgment. And many a guilty passio is restrained, and suppressed, from a natural fear of the justic of God, and an everlasting hell, without any inward principle o real piety.

It is not every resistance therefore that we make and mai tain against sin, can be a sufficient evidence that we are *new cre tures*, unless we can say with St. Paul; *Rom.* vii. 22. *I delig in the law of God after the inward man;* that my soul not on approves, but takes pleasure in holiness; that sin is the object o my utter hatred, as well as my present resistance; and that n only as it promotes my own ruin, but as it brings dishonour t God: that my very heart and soul are set for God and religio and it is a grief and daily burden to me, that there should be a such thing as *a law in my members warring against the law of m mind;* which makes the true christian cry out often, with bitte ness of soul, *O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver m from the body of this death?* Rom. vii. 24. Yet still it remai an incontestible truth, That where there is no resistance to th flesh, and the lusts thereof, there persons are not only in a sta of sin, but in the strongest bonds of iniquity; they have brut fied their human natures, and have made themselves *like th beasts that perish;* such was the character of the Ephesian Ge tiles when the gospel came first among them; they were *alienate from the life of God*, and being past feeling, gave themselves u to work all uncleanness with greediness; *Eph.* iv. 18, 19.

Remark II. There may be some spirit in a person whe there is much flesh; some holiness where there is much si For as none but saints in heaven are all spirit, and as the unre generate are all flesh; so the saints here upon earth, are som flesh and some spirit, because they are sanctified but in part; the are in their way towards perfection, but they are not perfect The spirit and the flesh conflict in them, *so that they cannot do th things which they would.* As they cannot serve God and practis holiness, with such constancy and zeal as they desire, because o the lusting of the flesh; so neither can they sink so far into sin nor indulge evil courses so far as the flesh would lead them, i they had no strivings of the spirit to resist it, no principles o

regeneration or holiness. They are led away indeed many times by sensual and fleshly allurements, but the chief objects of their pursuit are spiritual and heavenly; they have too many of the same vain affections and sinful desires, that were born of the flesh, remaining in them; but they have also new thoughts and hopes, new inclinations and appetites towards divine things, which could not be derived but from heaven, and prove them to be born of the spirit.

As unreasonable as it is therefore for any sincere christians to say, they are complete in holiness, or pretend to perfection in this life, because they find a work of grace in them: so it is equally unreasonable for them to charge themselves with being altogether carnal and unregenerate, because they find some of the lusts of the flesh warring in them. I would say, therefore, with compassion to such humble and doubting souls, while you are inhabitants in flesh, and your sanctification is imperfect, you will not have perfect peace, there will ever be some enemies within, for you to conflict with; and this inward war, this battle with flesh and blood, with self and sin, will by no means prove that ye are utterly unsanctified: No, it will rather give you some reasons to hope, that there may be a principle of holiness wrought in you, because you find a resistance against the flesh; especially if you experience also a zeal and hatred against every rising iniquity. The most holy soul in this life, can never prevent all the motions of irregular appetite: and the best of christians have much ado to curb and suppress some sinful affections which spring from this mortal body. The chiefest of saints had reason to complain that he was too often *led captive by the law of sin in his members;* Rom. vii. 23.

It is true indeed, if we were completely sanctified, if our spirits were entirely holy, they would constantly and effectually resist all evil motions and appetites of the flesh, so that they should not bring forth the fruits of iniquity and guilt: But where this resistance is not always effectual, yet if it be constant and sincere, and flow from a real hatred of sin, there the heart is renewed, and the spiritual life begun. Let trembling christians therefore be encouraged, though they may find many vexing ferments of the flesh, and disquieting passions sometimes stirring within them; let them not cast away their hope, but let them rather rejoice in the promises of the covenant, and go on daily to cleanse themselves, by the aids of divine grace, *from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God;* 2 Cor. vii. 1.

Remark III. What bold and impious folly are those guilty of, who give a loose to all the appetites and lusts of the flesh, under a pretence that it is their temper and constitution leads them to it; that it is their nature inclines them to riot in all luxury and

wantonness; and that they do but follow the leadings of natu
I would reason a little with persons of such a profligate c
racter, if they have not renounced reason as well as religion.

1. Consider, sinners, whether you are not under a g
mistake, while you say, that you obey all the dictates of na
when you rush on to fleshly iniquities. Have you no natural c
science within you that forbids these vile practices? Has it
given you many a check already, and many an inward repro
Have you no reason that tells you there is a God, and a ju
ment, and a terrible account one day to be given of the guilt
madness which you now indulge? It is but one part of y
nature then, and that the meanest and the vilest too, whose
tates you obey, when you give yourselves up to all intempera
The very heathens have such a conscience in them, such a
written in their hearts, to forbid, and to condemn the grosser ini
ties; *Rom.* ii. 15. And such an inward monitor belongs to y
nature too, unless you have entirely subdued and enslaved y
spirits, which are the best part of your natures, to the tyrann
your flesh; unless you have buried your reason in brutal appe
and *seared* your *conscience as with a hot iron*, that they may nei
feel nor speak.

2. You say, it is nature you obey, while you follow t
fleshly lusts; but is it not nature depraved and spoiled? Can
think it is the pure, the original and uncorrupted nature of ma
follow all the appetites of flesh and blood, and live upon a l
with *the brutes that perish?* Can you imagine that your s
and reason, and all the glorious powers of your intellectual na
in their first perfection, were made to be thus employed as lac
to the body, and mere purveyors to the flesh? Is it not a
your nature is fallen from its original state, while these me
powers of sense and passion have so mighty and sovereign
influence; and is it not rather the dictate of reason, and nat
and true self-love, that you should seek the recovery of
original excellencies, that you should use all methods to stop
heal the diseases of your nature, and to repair these ruin
humanity.

But 3. Suppose it were the inclination of animal natu
its original frame, to be intemperate, proud, angry, impatien
luxurious; and suppose all the present evil appetites and pas
of the flesh, were the attendants of man in his first estate; ye
not God your Creator and Governor, a right to place you
state of trial, in order to future rewards and punishments?
may he not forbid your spirit to comply with these inclinatio
nature and the flesh, as a test of your obedience to God
Maker? Is it not proper there should be some difficulties to
quer in such a probationary state? And if the God who

you, has actually appointed the matter of your probation or trial, to be a conflict of the spirit with flesh and blood, has he not a right to make this appointment? And does not your own reason and conscience tell you, that you deserve his anger and severe punishment, if you abandon yourself to all the wild motions and extravagances of bodily appetite, which he requires you to resist and subdue?

Bethink yourselves, O sinners, how you will answer it to God another day; that when he has given you a soul, a spirit, a conscience to fight against fleshly lusts, you should nourish and indulge them hourly? When he has offered his grace to change your corrupt natures, and has sent his only Son, and his eternal Spirit to purchase pardon for past sins, and to make new creatures of you; when he has taught you your duty, and offers divine aids to fulfil it; when he both entreats you as a friend, and commands you as a God, to resist these lusts of the flesh effectually, and be for ever holy and happy; that you should neglect the laws and mercies of a great and condescending God, and still run riot in the pursuit of forbidden passions and pleasure? *Can your hearts endure, or your hands be strong* in the day that the God of vengeance *shall appear in flaming fire*, to make enquiry into such rebellion? Can you be so stupid as to hope, that the poor pretences of flesh and nature, will screen you from just and almighty indignation? Awake, awake, O mistaken creatures, and let the man within you resume its place, and reason and conscience do their office. Awake from this vain and dangerous dream, this fatal security, and wilful blindness. Rouse the powers of your souls to arm, and fight in opposition to the sinful flesh; arise and bestir yourselves ere the time of trial be ended, and the decisive sentence of an offended God, doom you to miseries that have no end.

Remark IV. In this description of the principles of sin and holiness, as seated in our flesh, or in our spirit, we may see the nature of the christian warfare; that much of it consists in a fight of the spirit with flesh and blood. Little do some christians consider how much of religion lies in watching over their appetites and senses, and setting a guard upon the sinful tendencies of the flesh; little do they think how much of their piety and their holy peace depends on keeping down this flesh, and subduing it to the best service of the soul.

There may be some persons, who under pretence of serving God in the spirit, and the more exalted and refined notions and practices of christianity, give a loose to the flesh, in eating, and drinking, and dressing, and all the luxuries of life. But can these christians imagine, that when they pamper and indulge that wherein sin is chiefly seated, their spirits should long main-

tain their purity and heavenly-mindedness? St. Paul was of another mind; 1 *Cor.* ix. 27. *I keep under my body*, says he; I fight with my flesh which is my great enemy, υπωπιαζω και δουλαγωγω, I subdue it, and bear it down, as with heavy blows, I keep it under as a slave, lest *when I have preached to others, I myself should become a cast-away*; lest, when I have preached to others the doctrines of mortifying the flesh, and of walking according to the spirit, I should indulge such fleshly sins as would prove my eternal ruin.

Let not any man imagine, that I am here teaching the Romish penances, and monkish severities; there is no necessity of sack-cloth and beggary, scourging and starving, in order to keep the body fit for the duties of religion. Surely there is a medium between the self-indulgence of some lazy and carnal christians, and the superstitious forms of mortifying the flesh, practised in the popish church; and if, under a pretence of sublime spirituality, we let the fleshly appetites get the mastery of us, the prosperity, and even the safety of the soul, will be in extreme hazard; for St. Peter and St. Paul agree well in this doctrine, that *fleshly lusts war against the soul*; 1 Pet. ii. 11.

I confess the apostle tells the Ephesians, chap vi. ver. 12. *We wrestle not against flesh and blood, &c.* But it is plain he means no more, than that flesh and blood are not our only enemies, but that we wrestle also *with principalities and powers, and spiritual wickedness, i. e.* with Satan and the powers of darkness. Yet we must remember that the powers of darkness chiefly attack our spirits by means of our flesh. I cannot believe they would have so much advantage over our souls as they have, if our souls were released from flesh and blood. Satan has a chamber in the imagination, fancy is his shop wherein to forge sinful thoughts; and he is very busy at this mischievous work, especially when the powers of nature labour under any disease, and such as affects the head and the nerves: He seizes the unhappy opportunity, and gives greater disturbances to the mind, by awakening the images of the brain in an irregular manner, and stimulating and urging onwards the too unruly passions. This crafty adversary is very ready to fish, as we say, in troubled waters; where the humours of the body are out of order. Thus he is wise to make his advantage of all our weaknesses, and to gain some interest in them, to execute his hellish designs thereby; 2 Cor. xii. 7. *A messenger of Satan and a thorn in the flesh*, were both together troublesome to St. Paul; whether they became two distinct enemies, or one strengthened by the influence of the other, is hard to determine; but thus much seems to be intimated, that some troublesome disorder in the flesh, gave a great occasion to Satan to buffet St. Paul more severely, and do him more mischief.

It is hard wrestling for a poor sanctified soul, with so violent and strong a yoke-fellow as our flesh. The powers of the flesh twine about our feeble spirit, and often pull it to the ground, and get the mastery of it. *The just man may fall down seven times, and rise again; but the wicked fall into mischief*, and attempt not to rise; Prov. xxiv. 16. We are tied to the flesh while we are here, and it is the biggest, and the hardest part of our state of trial, to be constantly tied to such flesh as ours is. All the adversaries we have besides, are not equal to the adversary that dwells with us, nor is all their power equal to the power of our flesh and blood, with its restless urgencies, leading us away from God to sin. There is so close a union between flesh and spirit, in this state, that we carry our prison about us, even the flesh in which we inhabit; we drag our chains about with us; we are tied down to our senses; we are too nearly allied to the passions and appetites of this animal in which the soul dwells, and these the soul cannot master and subdue entirely; however, let us wrestle *with flesh and blood*, as well as with the tempting world, and the malice of Satan; let us bestir ourselves, and *fight the good fight of faith*, for the crown is worth the labour of the conquest.

Yet there is another difficulty attends this part of our spiritual warfare, *viz.* This is a combat to which the *Captain of our Salvation* did not lead us on in person, and in which Christ never went before us. It is a labour of piety in which our blessed Saviour was not our pattern; nor could he be, for he had no principle of sin in his soul, nor any sinful motion in all his sensitive powers. His flesh itself, in a literal sense, was born of the spirit, and he was all spirit, all holy. *The Holy Ghost* overshadowed the blessed virgin; *and that holy thing that was born of Mary*, was sanctified in its original, and united to the eternal Son of God; *Luke* i. 35. Never had he one disorderly passion; never one vicious appetite, no criminal wish, no guilty inclination; he knew no excessive tendencies towards a lawful object, nor did he feel any inward propensity toward an unlawful one. *He took part* of flesh and blood, indeed because *the children were partakers of it: In all things was he made like to his brethren, but without sin*, and tempted in all points, as we are, except this inward and native temptation; *Heb.* ii. 14, 17. and iv. 15. This part of our warfare, therefore, we have no perfect pattern for; the leader of the holy army never went through these special and sore conflicts, in which our spirits are daily engaged, even the war with corrupt nature and sinful flesh: yet he pities and sympathizes with us; for, as God, he knows our whole frame perfectly; and he knows, as man, what our flesh is, and what its sinful appetites are, so far as his holy nature will admit of this sympathy. In such a case as this, which he never experienced, yet

he supplies us with such grace as is effectually suited to relieve these agonies; and the kind angel of the covenant will be at our right-hand, to strengthen the sincere combatants, that they be not overcome.

Remark V. How much do our fellow-christians deserve our pity, that labour under great difficulties, and great darkness, through the perverse humours of their flesh? through the untoward constitutions of their nature, through the peevish, or proud, or malicious, or passionate tempers of their mortal body?

Some have a more wrathful, some a more wanton mixture of blood and natural spirits; others again more melancholy in their constitution, are ready to overwhelm themselves with despair and unbelieving sorrows; they go on fighting and mourning all the day long, with many a violent contest, many a groan and struggle, many a sharp combat, and perhaps with many a wound too. They are often upon their knees for strength to subdue this ever present enemy the flesh, and can gain but little advantage; they are fighting from day to day, and their sins are so powerful still, that they think they never get nearer to the conquest: they labour and toil, pray and endeavour to obtain divine assistance, and yet are too often overcome. This is the case of many a christian who hath some strong corruption mingled with his constitution. Let us pity such and pray for them too, and not be hasty in censuring their character and their state: Bless God if your constitution be of a happier mould, and if your trials are not so great, and your temptations so heavy as theirs.

But you will say, "They sin often, and fall very foully, and dishonour religion more than you." It may be so; but it may be they fight harder than you do, and labour with more assiduity, and exercise more grace than ever you did, and yet are more frequently overcome by sin; so strong is the constitutional iniquity in some natures, more than it is in others. Therefore while you condemn the sin, let not the poor striving mourning sinner be censured heavily as to his character, or as to his estate. It was said of a very great man of God heretofore, that he had grace enough for ten men, but not half enough for himself, because his natural constitution was so very violent and passionate.

When thou seest therefore a christian often in sorrow, confessing his follies, and continually humbled under a sense of the levity of his spirit, or the vanity of his natural temper; when he grieves, that in such and such a season, he has indulged unlawful airs, and complied too far with the vices of company, when thou observest his spirit vexed and pained inwardly, that he has indulged any criminal appetite or passion beyond what has been

visible in thy own conduct; do not pride thyself in thy own purity, or disdain thy mourning brother, but say within thyself, "Perhaps he has watched and laboured more than I have done, and yet his own iniquity was too strong for him." Think with thyself that he was wrestling with a giant, and fought hard, and was overcome; but thy own combat was but as it were with a dwarf or a child, with some feebler vice that had less root in thy constitution; and therefore though thou hast laboured less, yet thou hast gained the victory. And to encourage such mourning christians, let me add, that in the future state, it is probable, the saints shall be rewarded not so much according to their actual success and victory, as according to the toil and labour of the combat.

Yet take this caution by the way too: Such persons should not think themselves innocent, because they fight harder against sin than others do; let them not think all warnings useless, nor be angry with the gentle admonitions of their friends, as though they were hard censures: for such christians have more need of warning than others, because they are more in danger. They ought to be crying out on themselves continually, *O wretched creature! who shall deliver me?* They should beg reproofs, and say, *Let the righteous smite me, it shall be kindness; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil that shall not break my head:* Rom. vii. 24. Psal. cxli. 5. Let my brethren watch over me, for I find I am not sufficient to be my own keeper; and let them have compassion on me, *plucking me out of the fire*, for I hate, as well as they, *the garment spotted with the flesh;* Jude, ver. 23. Thus the flesh must be brought under by constant watchfulness, prayer, and resistance, else we cannot maintain holiness and peace. Take heed therefore, O feeble and tempted christian, while thou art by prayer engaging the heavenly alliance on thy side, that thou let not thy own weapons drop, but maintain the war. The fight is to last but threescore years and ten; if thou overcome, there is the crown of life ready for thee, which Jesus the Judge shall bestow on all the conquerors.

Remark VI. How should we rejoice in hope of that hour that shall release us from this sinful flesh; when we shall serve God in spirit without a clog, without a tempter! O with what a relish of sacred pleasure should a saint read those words in 2 Cor. v. 8. *Absent from the body, and present with the Lord;* Absent from this traitor, this vexing enemy, that we constantly carry about with us! Absent from the clog and chain of this sinful flesh, the prison wherein we are kept in darkness, and are confined from God! Absent from these eyes that have drawn our souls afar from God by various temptations? and absent

from these ears by which we have been allured to transgression and defiling iniquities! Absent from those lusts and passions, from that fear and that hope, that pleasure and that pain, that love, that desire, and that anger, which are all carnal, and seated in the fleshly nature, and become the spring and occasion of so much sin to our souls in this state. *Absent from the body, and present with the Lord*: Methinks there is a heaven contained in the first part of these words, *absent from the body*; and a double happiness in the last, *present with the Lord*: present with him who hath saved our spirits through all the days of our christian conflict, and *hath given us the* final *victory*: Present with that God, who shall eternally influence us to all holiness, who shall forever shine upon upon us with his own beams, and make us conformable to his own holy image: Present with that Lord and Saviour, from whom it shall not be in the power of all creatures to divert or draw us aside.

It is by our flesh in this world that we are a-kin to so many temptations, a-kin to all the objects that stand around us, to tempt us from our God; and we are ready to cry out, "O the blessed angels that were never a-kin to the flesh! O those blessed spirits, who move swift as flames to execute the will of their God, without the incumberance of flesh, without being allured by that most powerful and successful tempter! Happy beings! they know not our toils; they feel them not; they are all spirit; they are all holy! O the blessed saints in glory, that are released from their flesh, which once they had so many, and so sore combats with! Their flesh, which heretofore prisoned them, and pained them, and drew them often away from God, contrary to that heavenly bias that was put upon their souls by God the Sanctifier!"

But we rejoice in hope that our turn shall come too. There is a day of deliverance from this sinful flesh provided for us. All our times are in the hand of God; and the best time, is the time of release from this sinful companion. Let our faith say, "I read in the promises that this same happiness belongs to me, which the saints above are now possessed of: It is coming, it is coming as fast as time and the heavens can move, as fast as days and hours can remove out of the way." Then we shall have no flesh for the world to lodge one temptation in, nor for Satan to make use of as an engine of his malice, to batter the constancy and duty of our souls; then we shall be freed from all those methods of injury to our spirits, which we receive now by means of the flesh.

Thus at the day of our death is derived a glorious liberty, and thence we date our joys; but our joys rise high indeed, if our faith can but look a little farther, and take a prospect of that day, when our flesh shall be raised in perfect holiness, and our spirits

completely holy, shall be rejoined to it; then it shall be no more, true, that flesh and spirit lust against each other, and these two are contrary; for flesh and spirit shall both draw one way, both lead us towards our divine original, and the first Father of our minds, shall concur together to influence us to perfect holiness; then, when our spirits shall be like God, the first and best of Spirits; and when our flesh shall be like the flesh of the Son of God, that great pattern of a glorified body.

And this day will surely come, for our Redeemer with his body is glorified in heaven, and he sits there as a pattern of our bodies to be glorified, and a pledge to assure us of it too. O come the day when he shall change these bodies of our vileness into the form of the body of his glory! and he can easily do it, by that power whereby he can subdue all things to himself; Phil. iii. 21. Then shall our flesh and our spirit join sweetly together and each of them fulfil and enjoy their part, in the business and blessedness provided for them in regions of unknown pleasure. *Amen.*

HYMN FOR SERMON IV.

Flesh and Spirit; or, the Principles of Sin and Holiness.

WHAT vain desires, and passions vain,
Attend this mortal clay!
Oft have they pierc'd my soul with pain,
And drawn my heart astray.

How have I wander'd from my God,
And following sin and shame,
In this vile world of flesh and blood
Defil'd my nobler frame!

For ever blessed be thy grace
That form'd my spirit new,
And made it of an heaven-born race,
Thy glory to pursue.

My spirit holds perpetual war,
And wrestles and complains,
And views the happy moment near,
That shall dissolve its chains.

Chearful in death I close my eyes,
To part with ev'ry lust,
And charge my flesh whene'er it rise,
To leave them in the dust.

How would my purer spirit fear
To put this body on,
If its old tempting powers were there,
Nor lusts, nor passions gone!

SERMON V.

The Soul drawing near to God in prayer.

Job xxiii. 3, 4.—O that I knew where I might find him: that I might come even to his seat; I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments.

THE FIRST PART.

THIS book of Job might, perhaps, be the first and earliest part of all the written word of God; for learned men, upon good ground, suppose that this history was elder than the days of Moses, and yet it hath many a sweet lesson of experimental religion in it, to teach the disciples of Christ; we may learn many duties and comforts from it in our day, *upon whom the ends of the world are come.* The style of it in some parts is so magnificent and solemn, in others so tender and affectionate, that we must feel something of devout passion when we read this history, if our hearts are but in a serious frame, and if our temper or circumstances of mind or body have any thing a-kin to the grief or piety of this good man.

Job had now heard long stories of accusation from his friends, while he was bowed down, and groaning under the heavy providences of God; they *persecuted him whom God had smitten,* and poured in fresh sorrows upon all his wounds. "I will turn aside, saith he, from man, for *miserable comforters are ye all;* and I will address myself to God, even to the God that smites me. *O that knew where I might find him!* The stroke of the father doth not make the child fly from him, but come nearer, and bow himself before his best friend: this is the filial temper of the children of God. "*My complaint is bitter,* (saith Job, ver. 2.) because of my sorrows from the hand of God, and from the accusations and reproaches of my friends; you may think I am too lavish in my complainings and my continual cries, but I feel more than I complain of." And therefore Job is set up as a pattern of patience; for he could say, my stroke is heavier than my groaning.

There are some of the children of God who give themselves up to a perpetual habit of complaints and groans, though no trial hath befallen them but what is common to men; they make all around them sensible of every lesser pain they feel, and being always uneasy in themselves, they take the kindest and gentlest

admonition for an accusation; and while they imagine themselves in the case of Job, they resent highly every real or suspected injury: in short, they make a great part of their own sorrows themselves, and then they cry out and complain; and among their dismal complainings, they often, without reason, assume the words of Job as their own, and say, *my stroke is heavier than my groaning*. In some persons this is the temper of their natures, and in others a mere distemper of the body; but both ought to watch against it, and resist it, because it appears so much like sinful impatience and fretfulness, that it cannot be indulged without sin.

There are others, whose real afflictions are dreadful indeed, and uncommon, who seem to tire all their friends with their complaints too; but, it may be, if we knew all their variety of sorrows, and could take an intimate view of every outward and inward wound, we should acknowledge their stroke was heavier than their groaning; and especially when God is in such a measure absent from them too, that they are at a loss, as Job was, how they should come at him or converse with the heavenly Father: then their souls break out into vehement desires, *O that I knew where I might find him!*

A child of God who is wont to maintain a constant and humble correspondence with heaven, does often receive such sensible influences of instruction and comfort from the throne of grace, that he is led on sweetly in the path of daily duty, by the guiding providences of God, and by the secret directions of his Holy Spirit. He finds divine pleasure in his morning addresses to the mercy-seat, and returns to the throne in the evening with joy in his heart, and praise upon his tongue. He has something to do with the great God, in a way of humble devotion, in all his important concerns; but if God retire and withdraw from him, he feels and bemoans the divine absence, and his heart meditates grief and complaints; and when at the same time he is pressed with other burdens too, he breathes after God with a sacred impatience, and longs to know where he may find him: then says the soul, "*O if I could but come near to the seat of God, in my addresses to him, I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments.*" This brings me to the doctrine, which shall be the subject of my discourse.

Observation. When a christian gets near the seat of God in prayer, he tells him all his sorrows, and pleads with him for relief.

In discoursing on this doctrine I shall consider four things.—I. How may we know when a soul gets near to God in prayer; or what is to get near the seat of God.—II. What are the parti-

cular subjects of holy converse between God and the soul.—III. Why such a soul tells God all his sorrows.—IV. How he pleads with God for relief.

First, How may we know when a soul gets near the seat of God in prayer?

I answer, there will be some or all these attendants of nearness to God.

I. There will be an inward sense of the several glories of God, and suitable exercises of grace in the soul. For when we get near to God, we see him, we are in his presence; he is then, as it were, before the eyes of the soul, even as the soul is at all times before the eyes of God. There will be something of such a spiritual sense of the presence of God, as we shall have when our souls are dismissed from the prison of this flesh, and see him face to face, though in a far less degree: It is something that resembles the future vision of God in the blessed world of spirits; and those souls who have had much intimacy with God in prayer, will tell you that they know, in some measure, what heaven is. The soul, when it gets near to God, even to his seat beholds several of his glories displayed there; for it is a seat of majesty, a seat of judgment, and a seat of mercy. Under these three characters is the seat of God distinguished in scripture; and because this word is part of my text, I shall therefore a little enlarge upon these heads.

When the soul gets near to God, it sees him,

1. As upon a seat of majesty. There he appears to the soul in the first notion of his divinity or godhead, as self-sufficient, and the first of beings: He appears there as the infinite ocean, the unmeasurable fountain of being, and perfection, and blessedness; and the soul, in a due exercise of grace, shrinks, as it were, into nothing before him, as a drop, or a dust, a mere atom of being. The soul is in its own eyes at that time, what it is always in the eyes of God, as nothing, and less than nothing and vanity. He appears then in the glory of his all-sufficience, as an almighty Creator, giving birth, and life, and being to all things; and the soul, in a due exercise of grace, stands before him as a dependant creature, receiving all its powers and being from him, supported every moment by him, and ready to sink into utter nothing, if God withdraw that support. Such is God, and such is the soul, when the soul draws near to God in worship.

He appears again upon his seat of majesty as a sovereign, in the glory of his infinite supremacy, and the soul sees him as the supreme of beings, owns his just sovereignty, and subjects itself afresh, and for ever to his high dominion. O with what deep humility and self-abasement doth the saint, considered merely as a creature, cast himself down at the foot of God, when

he comes near to the seat of his majesty! *Behold*, saith Abraham, *I now have taken upon me to speak unto thee, I who am but dust and ashes;* Gen. xviii. 27. This is the language of a saint when got near to the seat of the majesty of God, "Before I had seen thee as such a sovereign, I was restive and stubborn: in times past I quarrelled with God because of difficult duties imposed upon me, and because of the difficult dispensations I was made to pass through; but now I behold God so infinitely my superior, that I can quarrel no more with any duty, or any difficulty; I submit to all his will: whatsoever he will have me be, that I am; whatsoever he bids me do, that I do; for it is fit he should be a sovereign, and I should be a subject. I give myself to him afresh, and for ever, that he may dispose of me according to his own will and for his own glory: I would be more regardless of myself, and more regardful of my God; it is fit he should be the ultimate end of all that I can be, and all that I can do, for he is my sovereign."

Again, when a soul is near to God, God appears in the glory of his holiness; for the seat of his majesty is called the throne of his holiness; *Ps.* xlvii. 8. And then the heavens are not clean in his sight: and the soul cries out with those worshipping seraphims, *Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory:* and joins with Isaiah, the worshipping saint, in that humble language, *who is me, for I am a man of unclean lips, &c.* You see the character of a saint getting near to God, and standing before the seat of his majesty; *Is.* vi. 3, 4. where the angels and the prophet worship together with the deepest humility. "I have heard of thy holiness before, says the soul, and I have heard before of thy glory afar off; but now *mine eyes see it, and I abhor myself in dust and ashes;* Job xliii. 6.

2. His seat is to be considered as a seat of judgment; for God is not only a king, but a judge: and Job has, without doubt, a reference to this in my text, because the language which he uses, seems suited to a throne of judicature, a throne of justice. "If I could get near his seat, I would order my cause before him, I would plead with him." The soul that gets near to God, sees him sitting upon a seat of judgment, as an omniscient God: he looks like the judge of all the earth, and his eyes are like a flame of fire to search our souls to the centre, and to know our most hidden thoughts: the soul then attempts no more to conceal itself, no more to hide its guilt or its wretchedness; for it beholds those eyes of God that see through all things, that search into the deepest hypocrisy, and it is impossible that any thing should be concealed from him. "Behold I am before that God, says the soul, before whom nothing can be hid; before whom all things are naked and open; and it is with him that I have to do; there-

fore I open my heart before him, and I spread open all my inward powers, for he sees and knows them all, should I attempt to conceal them." "I behold him in his infinite and inflexible justice, as well as in his all-seeing knowledge; and I cry out, *If thou, O Lord, shouledst mark iniquity, O Lord who should stand?*" Ps. cxxx. 4. This is the language of the holiest saint getting near to God here on earth, as seated upon a seat of judgment.

The soul beholds him also as girt with resistless power to execute his own laws; and the thunder of his power, says Job who can understand? xxvi. 14. He has armies of angels, ministers of fire, attendants on his tribunal, and swift to execute the sentence of his mouth. The saint sees him thus invested, thus surrounded, and adores and fears before him. The soul beholds him with rewards in one hand, and punishments in the other; infinite rewards, and infinite punishments; distributing to the unseen world perpetual blessedness, and perpetual pains. "I behold him arrayed in this glory, saith the saint, I expect my sentence from his lips, from whence eternal blessings, and eternal curses, are dispensed to all the regions of heaven and hell; but he will not plead against me with his great power; the sentence that comes forth from his mouth, I trust, shall be on my side."

3. He appears as sitting upon a throne of grace. The majesty and judgment that belong to his seat, do not forbid mercy to attend him; he sits upon a seat of mercy, and *there*, says Job, *the righteous might surely dispute with him;* xxiii. 7. and there I should be delivered from his terrors as an avenging God; there, though he judge me, yet he will plead my cause; for the same Judge that sits upon a throne of glory, has taken upon him to become my Advocate. "There I behold him, says the soul, with millions of pardons for vile transgressors, and with abundant favour for rebels; such a rebel am I, and such a transgressor, and yet there is pardon and grace for me. I behold there riches and raiment for the poor, the needy, and the naked, and help for the weak believer." There goodness appears in the face of God, in all the sweet variety of its divine forms. There appears long-suffering for old sinners, and patience for repeated guilt, and pity for the miserable, and free grace for those that deserve nothing but vengeance. All this discovers itself in the face of God, to a soul that gets near him, even to his mercy-seat; and the soul bows, and wonders, and worships, and makes still nearer approaches, and receives the grace, and rejoices in the salvation.

The soul puts in for a share in this mercy with faith and hope, and will not be denied, will not be excluded; then he uses that holy boldness, that παρρησια, or liberty of speech; *Heb.* iv. 16. And this is the language of faith, when the soul gets near to God: "Since there are so many millions of pardons with thee

for sinners, I will not go away without one; since there is such a righteousness as that of thine own Son to clothe the naked, I will not go away without being clothed with this righteousness; since there are such supplies of strength for the weak, I will not leave thy seat till I get some strength." The soul then wrestles and pleads, and makes supplication as Jacob did when he came near to God; *Gen.* xxxii. 22. *I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.* The soul beholds in God mercy enough for the largest multitude of sinners, and pardons large enough for the blackest offences; it sees Paul the persecutor and blasphemer so near to the right-hand of God in glory, that it cries out with a joyful faith, "All the aggravations of my guilt shall no more divide me from the mercy-seat, shall no more prevent my hope and help in God; for there sits Paul the persecutor and blasphemer; and he was set forth as an example how full God is of mercy!" 1 *Tim.* i. 16. *I obtained mercy, that in me first Christ Jesus might shew all long-suffering, for a pattern to believers.* This is the temper, this is the voice, and this is the language of a soul that gets near to God, even to his seat, considered as a seat of majesty, of judgment, and of grace.

I proceed now to the second sign or attendant of holy nearness to God in prayer.

II. When a soul comes near to God in prayer, there will generally be some sweet taste of the special love of God, and warm returns of love again to God from the soul. The soul that comes near to God is not satisfied merely with low degrees of faith and hope, with some feeble dependance, and some faint expectations of mercy; it can hardly leave God till it has an assurance. Faith and hope in the mercy of God, are different from that joy that arises from the immediate sensations of divine love. The Psalmist in the lxiii. *Psalm*, ver. 1, 2, &c. seems to have a reference to both these particulars together, which I have already mentioned. *My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee —to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.* "I have seen thee in the sanctuary as sitting upon a throne of majesty, on a seat of judgment and of grace; I have seen thy power and thy glory there, and I have seen something more than this, I have tasted some special-loving-kindness, and that loving-kindness is better than life, therefore my lips shall praise thee. I have had a sense of the special love of God shed abroad in my soul, I have known his love is exercised toward me, therefore my soul is full of praise." God will seldom let a soul that is got so near him by holy labour and fervency of spirit, go away merely with hope and dependance, without some sacred delight and joy.

A saint that has drawn near to God in worship, will tell you his own rich experience, and say, "When I found him whom my soul loveth, I was constrained to break forth into these sweet expressions, I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine: for I love him above all things, and my love is but the effect of his. In that blessed hour I felt, and I was assured of that mutual relation between God and me: I found so much of his image stamped on me, that I knew I was the Lord's: whence I rejoice in the full persuasion of his love. I know he loves me, for his sanctifying Spirit hath witnessed with my spirit, that I am one of his children; and I know that I love him, for my spirit witnesseth also as an echo to his Spirit, that I have chosen him for my Father, my Ruler, and my God, and have surrendered myself to him on his own terms; and I address him as my Father, with words of the choicest affection, and of most endeared sentiments of soul."

When a person in whom grace is wrought, gets so near to God, and sees this God in his own loveliness, and in his kindest perfections, there are some new divine passions kindled in the soul towards this God, towards this first beauty, towards this original of all perfection and goodness; and God will seldom let one come so near him, without shewing him the love of his heart; and the name of the devout worshipper graven, as it were, on the palms of his hands, or in the book of his mercy. He speaks to the soul in his own divine language, "Son, or daughter, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee. O man, thou art greatly beloved. I am your God, and you are my people. I have bought thee dear, and thou art mine. I have created thee, O Jacob; I have formed thee, O Israel; I have redeemed thee, O believer, and thou art for ever mine." And such discoveries of the love of God to the soul, draw out still more love from the soul towards God, and raise more sacred exercices of divine love in one hour, than a whole year of common devotions can do; and the saint learns more of this sacred sensation of the love of God, than years of cold and common devotions would teach him.

III. When the soul gets near to God in prayer, there will be a hatred of sin at the very thoughts of it, and holy meltings and mournings under the remembrance of its own sins. "How hateful does sin appear, will the soul say, now I am come so near to the seat of a Holy God! Never did I see sin in so dark and so odious colours, as this hour reveals and discovers to me; never did I so sensibly behold the abomination that is in all sin, as now I do; I never saw it so contrary to all that is in God, to his holiness, to his glory, to his justice, and to his grace. O wretch that I am, that I should ever have indulged iniquity! that I should ever have borne with such an infinite evil in my heart? that I should ever take delight in such mischief against God! Now I hate and abhor

myself because of sin. O that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night, because I have been such a sinner so long, and because I am so much a sinner still!" The heart of a saint that comes near to God, is pained at the memory of old sins; and together with a present sweetness of divine love, there is a sort of anguish at the thoughts of past iniquities. A present God will make past sins look dreadful and heinous; therefore it is that sin looks so little to us, and appears so light a thing, because we seldom get near to the seat of God, and bring our iniquities to that divine light.

It is a very common instance, and you all know it, that a blot or spot on a paper or garment, looks so much deeper, when the place you view it in is lighter; at noon-day, and in the eye of the sun, those smaller blemishes appear, which at other times are utterly unseen, and every greater spot, every fouler stain, looks most odious and disagreeable. Just thus it is with the soul, when it is displayed under the eye of the Sun of Righteousness; every blemish, every defilement appears, and the soul hates itself so far as it is sinful, while sin itself looks infinitely more odious. Therefore Job says, ix. 30. *Should I wash myself in snow-water, and make myself never so clean, thou wouldest plunge me in the ditch, and my own clothes would abhor me*; that is, "should I use all the methods of cleansing that are possible, and then enter into thy immediate presence, that light of thy presence would discover so many spots and defilements upon me, as if I had just plunged myself in a ditch, and my garments had been all over defiled."

[This sermon, if too long, may be divided here.]

IV. At such a time there is a power and virtue enters into the soul, coming from a present God, to resist sin, and to oppose great temptation." "*I can do all things, if Christ be near to strengthen me*, says the apostle; Phil. iv. 13. When I was afflicted with the buffeting of Satan, says the same apostle; 2 Cor. xii. 8, 9. for this I applied myself to the mercy-seat, and I got near to the throne of grace; there I pleaded with my God, and I received this answer from him; *My grace is sufficient for thee*; then, says he, I could glory in infirmities, and in persecutions for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong; when I feel my own weakness, and see Almighty strength near me, and engaged on my side, then I grow strong in courage, and with success encounter my most powerful adversaries. I will not fear, says David, though thousands have set themselves together against me, if thou art with me, my strength and my rock: I will walk through the valley of the shadow of death, and fear no evil; Psal. xxiii. 4. for thou art with me." Divine courage and fortitude are increased abundantly by coming so near to the throne of God.

There is a zeal for God enters into the soul at such a season, and the soul is more desirous to lay out itself for the glory of God at such a time. Moses had drawn near to God in the mount, and had been with him forty days; when he came down from the mount, he beheld the people filled with idolatry, and he brake the tables of stone in an impatience of zeal; his zeal for God was so great, he hardly knew what he did, his zeal for God was kindled high, because he had been so near to God, and just conversing with him. So, Isaiah vi. 8. when that great saint had been near to God, and had seen him in the glories of his holiness, and had some courage and confidence in his love, "Now I will go, says he, upon any difficult message; Here am I, send me, though it be to fulfil the hardest service." There will be generally all these attendants of great nearness to God, viz. power against temptation, strength against sin, zeal for the glory of God in the world, and ability to perform difficult duties.

V. There will be a spiritual frame introduced into the heart and a distance from all carnal things. "Stand by, saith the soul to all this world, whilst I go to seek my God; but when I have found him, then the world of itself, as to all the temporal concerns of it, vanishes and goes out of sight. When I get so near to heaven, this earth is so small a point, that it cannot be seen, and those comforts among the creatures, that were fair as the moon, or bright as the larger stars, are vanished and lost, and disappear under the brighter light of this Sun." Created beauties, with all their little glimmerings, tempt the soul toward them, when God is absent; as a twinkling candle entices the silly fly at midnight to hover about the rays of it; but the candle faints under the broad beams of rising day-light; it has no power to attract those little buzzing animals in the morning, and it is quite invisible at noon. So the very approach of God makes creatures appear more contemptible and worthless in the esteem of a devout christian; a God near at hand will drive the creatures afar off; and a present God will command the world to utter absence. None of the tempting vanities of life come in sight, and sometimes not the most important concerns of it remain before the eye of the saint, when God appears and fills the view and prospect of his spirit. The soul is taken up with spiritual things, therefore carnal ones vanish; it is entertained and filled with the majesty of God, the riches of grace, redeeming grace; with the glory of Christ Jesus, the beauty of his person, the honour of his characters, his various excellencies, and the super-eminence of his offices, both in the constitution and discharge of them; the soul is then warmed with a zealous concern for the church of Christ, and big with the designs of the honour of God, while it forgets the world.

Or at such a season as this, when we get near to God in prayer, if we think of any of the creatures, it is all in order to the honour of God. If I think of a brother, or father, or child, "O may they all be instruments in thine hand, for thy honour here among men, and for ever among blessed angels!" The soul does not ask for riches and glories on earth for them: but, "May they live in thy sight, O Lord!" If it thinks of the comforts of life, or the blessings of prosperity, "O let holiness to the Lord be written upon them all; for I would not have one of them, but what may subserve thine honour in the world." If the soul thinks of its pains, and sorrows, and reproaches, it longs for the sanctification of them at present, and the removal of them in due season, that it may serve its God the better. Thus the soul is, as it were, taken out of self, when it gets near to God.

"Let me have the conveniences of life, (says the christian,) not so much for my ease, as that I may better advance thine honour." The soul grows weaned from self at such a time; it breaks out of the narrow circle of self, when it gets nigh to God. If it thinks of the ministry or of ordinances, "Lord, let that ministry be for the advancement of thy name! Lord, let these ordinances be for the increase of thy glory in the world, for the advancement of grace in my heart, and bring me nearer to heaven! If it thinks of the kingdom, or the parliament, powers or princes in this world, it is with this design, that God may be glorified in the courts of princes, and in parliaments, and honoured in armies and nations known and unknown." Thus the soul always keeps within sight of God: it still keeps all its designs within the circle of God, and aims still at the glories of its Heavenly Father. If it thinks of life or of death, "I would not ask life, says the saint, but to glorify thee; nor death, but to glorify thee better, and to enjoy more of thee." Thus when the soul is near to God, it is in a divine light that it sees all things, it is still with a design for God; and when it indulges the thoughts toward any creature, it is without turning aside a moment from its God. Thus carnal things are taken into the mind, and spritualized by the presence of God, the infinite Spirit, when the soul approaches so near to his seat.

VI. There will then be a fixedness of heart in duty without wandering, and liveliness without tiring. At other times of common and usual worship, when the saint is in too formal and in too cold a frame, the heart roves perpetually, and is soon weary; but when we get near to God, then we have a little emblem of heaven within us, where they worship God day and night without interruption, and without weariness. When we wait upon God at this rate, we are still mounting up higher and

higher, as with eagles' wings; we walk first without fainting, and then run without wearying, at last, we fly as an eagle, and make haste to the fuller possession of our God; Is. xl. 31. The soul is then detained in the presence of God with overpowering delight, and it cannot be taken away from the object of its dearest satisfaction. This is a joy above all other joys, above all the joys of sense, above all the joys of the intellectual world that are not divine and holy. There are some pleasures that arise from philosophical and intellectual notions, that are superior to the pleasures of sense; but the pleasure of being near to God in devotion, far transcends all these. Animal nature, at such a season, may be worn out, and faint and die under it; but the mind is not weary. It is possible for divine transports to rise so high as to break this feeble frame of flesh, and dissolve it; and there have been instances of persons that have been near to a dissolution of mortality under the power of divine ecstacies: but the soul has not been faint, has felt no weariness.

There are at such a season most pleasurable thoughts of heaven; there are some bright glimpses of that blessed state when a christian attains this nearness to God; for heaven is a state of nearness to God everlasting and uninterrupted: nor are the blessed inhabitants of that world ever weary of their company or their business; and thus, when there is any thing akin to heaven brought down to the saints in this mortal state, they know it cannot be uninterrupted and perpetual; and therefore there is a desire of frequent returns of such seasons as these are, while they are here on earth. And as Christ, the bridegroom, speaks to his saints in the language of Solomon, *Let me see thy face* often, *my spouse, my beloved, let me hear thy voice;* Song ii. 44. and viii. 13. So the saint says to his God at such a season, "O may I often see thy face in this manner, may I often hear such a voice as this is from thee, for I know not how to live without it. Flee, my beloved Saviour, and make haste to a speedy return, and let there be an uninterrupted and everlasting converse between God and my soul."

Lastly, There is at such a season oftentimes a pouring out of the soul before God with some freedom in the gift, as well as the grace of prayer. Mere sighs and groans are for persons at a distance; but when we get near to God, we speak to him even in his ear; and the heart is full, and the tongue overflows. I grant there may be the spirit of prayer assisting a poor soul that cannot get near to God, but still cries after him when he is hidden, and expresses itself only in sighs and in groans unutterable; so the apostle tells us; Rom. viii. 26. *The spirit itself maketh intercession in us with groanings that cannot be uttered.* And thus it may be, while God hides himself, while there is a veil conceal-

ing God from our eyes, while there is any special temptation like a mountain that separates between God and our souls, he may send his Spirit to work us up to earnest desires and longings after him.

But when this SPIRIT OF PRAYER has brought the soul near, when God has been pleased to turn aside the veil, to remove the mountain, and to discover himself in all his glory, beauty, and love, then there will be generally the gift of prayer also in exercise by the assistance of the promised Spirit; and such persons many times are able to address themselves to God with much freedom, and to pour out the soul before God in proper words, notwithstanding at other times they appear to have but weak capacities. When they have such affecting sights of their own sin and guilt, and such surprizing views of the mercy of God manifested to them in particular, and at the same time when they look upon all things round them with a design for the glory of God; they are both naturally and divinely taught to pour out their souls before God, and represent their cares and circumstances to him in affecting language.

I will not say indeed, it is always so when any soul gets near to God; there must be some allowance made for the different tempers and constitutions, as I shall shew immediately. There have also been some instances of holy men, whose voice has, at such a time, been overpowered with divine pleasure, all their powers have been transported and overwhelmed with rapturous silence; but for the most part holy souls have found an uncommon liberty of language at the throne of grace at such seasons. And this is one reason, I am persuaded, why the gift of prayer is not so common a thing as might be wished, because there is so little nearness to God among the professors of our day. The gift of prayer abounds not among christians in our churches; O that I could say it was found more gloriously among ministers, while in your name we speak to the great God! But if there were a constant laborious diligence in the soul to get nearer to God, in all our secret as well as public addresses to him, we should find more abundance of the gift of prayer poured down upon us by the Spirit, as well as brighter evidences of every praying grace.

I must conclude this discourse before I proceed to the other heads which were proposed; but I would not willingly leave it without a caution or two, and one reflection. The first caution is this: Let not the humble mourning christian, who walks carefully with God, under much darkness and fear, charge himself with utter distance and estrangement from the throne of grace, because he does not feel all these sacred passions and powers of nature in lively exercise, while he bows his knees before the Lord: for I

have described this blessed privilege in the sublime glory an beauty of it, so as it has been often attained and enjoyed b persons eminent in grace and religion, and especially suc as have had lively affections, and the powers of animal na ture in a good degree sanctified, and subservient to the devo tions of the soul. But where the natural spirits are low and sinking, and where temptations and darkness hang heav upon the mind, the christian may truly draw near to God, s far as to find a gracious acceptance with him, and may fetc secret divine communications from the mercy-seat to main tain his spiritual life; though he feels but little of these sen sations of heavenly pleasure, these more vigorous efforts o devotions and joy. Yet let him neither deny nor despis those more elevated enjoyments of soul, those near and bles sed approaches to the seat of God, with which others hav been favoured.

The second caution shall be addressed to those, who fee much of rapture and transport in their hours of secret piety. I entreat that they would not imagine themselves so often to enjoy this unspeakable privilege of holy nearness to God in worship, i they do not sensibly find such an increase of holiness, as may prove effectually that they have been with God. If they have been conversing with their Maker, like Moses in the mount, there will be a shine of holiness upon the face of their souls. To pretend therefore to have enjoyed much of God in the closet, and to come down amongst men peevish and fretful, or immediately to betray a carnal and covetous, or a haughty and untractable spirit; these are things of so inconsistent a nature, that the succeeding iniquity spoils the devotion, and almost destroys the pretence to any sublime degrees of it. Such persons had need look well to themselves and make a narrow search within, whether their hearts be sincere with God or no, lest they build all their hopes upon the flashy efforts of animal nature, coupled with the thoughts of some sacred objects, and tacked on to a divine meditation.

Reflection.—What a wretched hindrance is this world to our christian profit and pleasure! How often does it keep the soul at a sad distance from God! With what difficulty and uneasy reluctance, are we sometimes drawn, or rather dragged into retirement, that the soul may seek after God there? How many excuses doth the flesh borrow from the cares and necessities of this life, to delay, or to divert the duty of prayer? Our memory, our imagination, and our senses, are faithful purveyors and treasurers for the world; they are representing to us the things of this present state, the trifles or the businesses, the cares or amusements of it, the labours or delights which relate to this life;

and thereby we are diverted and separated from God, and called away from him often, as soon as we begin to approach his presence.

What a pernicious enemy is this flesh to the soul, both in the pleasures and the pains of it! and this world, both in the flatteries and the frowns of it, and even in its necessary cares! When we would give our God the upper-room in our hearts, how is this world ready to get the ascendant! How often does it break in upon our most sacred retirements, and thrust itself, with all its impertinencies, into our holy meditations? How often does it spread a carnal scene all over our thoughts at once, and spoil our devoutest hours? "I cannot dwell so long in my closet as I would, says a christian, the world has such importunate demands upon me." The world follows us, into our places of retirement; the exchange, or the shop, presses into the temple, and robs God even to his face.

Let us then have a care of the flesh: let us have a care of this world; we must be watchful over them as our most subtle and dangerous enmies, if we would keep our souls near to God, or often enjoy this divine privilege. Blessed Enoch! who could walk with God in the midst of all the busy and vicious scenes of the old world! and he was translated to heaven, without calling at the gates of death, that he might give a glorious testimony to men how well God was pleased with him. Happy soul! that could keep near to God, and maintain a holy and humble converse with him, when all flesh had corrupted its way and the earth was full of iniquity and violence! Blessed man, who knew not what it was to die, but he knew what it was to be near to God; and his faith and his devotion were changed the shortest way into sight and enjoyment! Happy spirit! who without being absent at all from the body, was brought near to the seat of divine Majesty, and in the fullest manner present with the Lord!

HYMN FOR SERMON V.

The Soul drawing near to God in prayer.

MY God, I bow before thy feet,
When shall my soul get near thy seat?
When shall I see thy glorious face,
With mingled majesty and grace?

How shall I love thee and adore,
With hopes and joys unknown before!
And bid this trifling world begone,
Nor teaze my heart so near thy throne!

Creatures with all their charms should fly,
The presence of a God so nigh:
My darling sins should lose their name,
And grow my hatred and my shame.

My soul shall pour out all her cares,
In flowing words, or flowing tears!
Thy smiles would ease my sharpest pain
Nor should I seek my God in vain.

SERMON VI.

Sins and Sorrows spread before God.

Job xxiii. 3, 4.—O that I knew where I might find him: that I might com even to his seat; I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth wi arguments.

THE SECOND PART.

THERE is such a thing as converse with God in prayer, an it is the life and pleasure of a pious soul; without it we are n christians: and he that practises it most, is the best follower Christ: for our Lord spent much time in converse with his heaven ly Father. This is balm that eases the most raging pains of th mind, when the wounded conscience comes to the mercy-sea and finds pardon and peace there. This is the cordial that re vives and exalts our natures, when the spirit, broken with sorrow and almost fainting to death, draws near to the Almighty Phy sician, and is healed and refreshed. The mercy-seat in heave is our surest and sweetest refuge in every hour of distress a darkness on earth: This is our daily support and relief, while are passing through a world of temptations and hardships in t way to the promised land. *It is good for us to draw near to Go* Ps. lxxiii. 28. And yet so much is human nature sunk down a fallen from God, that even his own children are ready to indulg neglect of converse with him, if their souls are not always up the watch. But let it be remembered here, that so much as abate of this divine entertainment among the vanities or amus ments of the world, the business or burdens of life; so mu we lose of the glory and joy of religion, and deprive our so of the comfort that God invites us to receive. Job was enco passed with sorrows all around, and his friends had censu ed him as a vile hppocrite, and a great sinner, because was so terribly afflicted by the hand of God; whither shou he run now but to his heavenly Father, and tell him of all sufferings.

From the practice of this holy man, I thought we might h sufficient warrant to draw this inference, *viz.* That when a sa gets near to God in prayer, he tells him all his circumstanc and pleads for help. And that is the doctrine which I endeavouring now to improve. "O if I could but co near him, even to his seat, I would order my cause bef

him: I would spread all my concerns before his eye, and I would plead with him for relief: I would fill my mouth with arguments.

Four things I proposed in the prosecution of this doctrine.—I. To consider what it is for a soul to get near to God in prayer.—II. What particular subjects doth a soul, thus brought near to the mercy-seat, converse with God about.—III. Why he chuses to tell all his circumstances and his sorrows to God, when he is thus near him.—IV. How he pleads for relief.

I. We have already considered, what it is for a soul to get near to the seat of God, and what are the usual attendants of such a privilege. At such a season the holy soul will have an awful and adoring sense of the majesty of God, a becoming fear of his terrors, and some sweeter taste of his love. There will be a divine hatred of every sin, and a sensible virtue and influence proceeding from a present God, to resist every temptation; there will be a spiritual and heavenly temper diffusing itself through the whole soul, and all the powers of it; a fixedness of heart without wandering, and a liveliness without tiring: no weariness is felt in the spirit at such a season, even though the flesh may be ready to faint under the overpowering sweetness: then the soul with freedom opens itself before the eye of God, and melts and flows in divine language, whether it complain or rejoice. But I have finished this head, and repeat no more.

II. What are some of the particular circumstances, or subjects of complaint, that a saint brings to God when he comes near him.

In general, a saint, when he is near to God, has all the fulness of his heart breaking out into holy language; he pours out his whole self before his God and his Father! All the infinite affairs that relate to the flesh and spirit, to this life, and that which is to come: all things in heaven, and all things in earth, created or uncreated, may, at one time or other, be the subjects of converse between God and a holy soul. When the question is asked by a carnal man, what can a christian talk with God so long and so often about? The christian in a divine frame, answers, "he hath matter enough for converse with God, to wear out time, and to fill up eternity." It may be as well asked on the other side, what has he not to say? what is there that relates to God, or to himself, to the upper, or the lower world, that he may not at some time say to his God?

But I must confine myself from wandering in so large a field, that I may comport with the design of my text. Though a good man, in devout prayer, often spreads his hopes and his joys before the Lord, as well as his sorrows, fears, and distresses; yet I shall at present endeavour to set forth only the mournful and

complaining representations of his circumstances that he mak before the throne of God.

1. If I could but come near the mercy-seat, I would confe how great my sins are, and I would pray for pardoning grace. would say, "How vile I am by nature;" I would count my or- ginal descent from Adam the great transgressor, and humbl myself at the foot of a holy God, because I am the descendant c such a sinner.—I would tell him how much viler I have mad myself by practice; "I have been an enemy in my mind by na ture, and guilty of many wicked works, whereby I have farthe estranged myself from him." I would tell my God how multi plied my transgressions have been before I knew him, and hov aggravated they have been since I have been acquainte with him. I would acquaint him with the frequency of m returning guilt, how I have sinned against mercies, against re proofs, against warnings received often from his word, and ofte from his providence.

I may appeal to the souls of many present, whether the have not had the greatest freedom of confession of their sins, whe they have been nearest to God, even though he be a God o holiness. At other times, they have not only been averse to con- fess to any friend, but even unwilling to talk over to themselve the aggravation of their iniquities, or to mention them in prayer but when they are brought thus near the throne of God, the unbosom themselves before him, they pour out their sins and thei tears together, with a sweet and mournful satisfaction. "I behold," says the saint, "the great atonement, the blood of Jesus, and there- fore I may venture to confess my great iniquities, for the satis- faction is equal to them all. When I behold God upon his seat I behold the *Lamb in the midst of the throne as it had been slain*, and he is my Peace-maker. I see his all-sufficient sacrifice, hi atoning-blood, his perfect, his justifying righteousness." The soul then answers the call of God with great readiness, whe God says in Is. i. 18. *Come let us reason together: though your sins have been as scarlet, they shall be as wool.* "I am ready," says the soul, "to enter into such reasonings; "I am ready to confes before thee, that my sins are all crimson and scarlet, but there is cleansing blood with thy Son: Blood that has washed the garments of a thousand sinners, and made them white as snow; and it has the same virtue still to wash mine too: I trust in it, and rejoice when I behold that blood sprinkled upon the mercy- seat, and therefore I grow confident in hope, and draw yet nearer to God, a reconciled God, since his throne has the memorials of a bleeding sacrifice upon it."

2. If I could get near the seat of God, I would tell him how many my enemies are, and how strong; how malicious, and how

ll of rage.——And I would beg strength against them, and ictory over them.——I would say as David: *Many there be that ate me, many there be that rise up against me; and many there be hat say of my soul, there is no help for him in God; but thou, O Lord, art my glory, my shield, and the lifter up of head:* Ps. iii. , 2, 3. Then says the soul, I would complain to God of all my n-dwelling corruption, of the body of death that dwells in me, r in which I dwell; and say, "O wretched man that I am, who hall deliver me!" I would tell him then of the secret working f pride in my heart, though I long to be humble; of the rising f ambition in my soul, though I would willingly maintain a iddle state amongst men, and not aim and aspire to be great.— would acquaint him of the vanity of my own mind, though I n perpetually endeavouring to subdue it. I would tell him, ith tears, of my sinful passions, of my anger and impatience, nd the workings of envy and revenge in me; of the perpetual irrings of disorderly appetites, whereby I am led away from my od: I would tell him of the hardness of my heart, and the ntinacy of my temper. I would open before his eye, all the ces of my constitution; all those secret seeds of iniquity that are er budding and blossoming to bring forth fruit to death. These ings are fit to mourn before the Lord, when the soul is come ar to his seat.

I would complain of this sore enemy, the world, that is pertually besetting me, that strikes upon all my senses, that by e ears, and the eyes, and all the outward faculties, draws my art away from God my best friend. I would tell him of the ge of Satan, that watchful and malicious adversary; that I nnot engage in any duty of worship, but he is ready to throw some foolish or vain suggestion to divert me; and I would look rward, and point to my last enemy death, and beg the presence my God with me, when I walk through that dark valley:— Lord, when I enter into that conflict, assist me, that I may ar no evil, but be made more than a conqueror through him at has loved me."

3. I would tell him what darkness I labour under, either in spect of faith or practice. If I am perplexed in my mind, and ntangled about any of the doctrines of the gospel, I would then ll my God what my entanglements are, where the difficulty es; and I would beg, that by his Spirit and his word, he ould solve the controversy, and set his own truth before me in s own divine light. And then in point of practice, what darkss lies upon the spirit at such a time, is revealed before God: My way is hedged up, I know not what path to choose; it is ry hard for me to find out my duty; shew me, O Lord,

the way wherein I should walk, and mark out my path plain for me."

4. I would mourn, and tell him, how little converse I have with himself, how much he is hidden from me: I would complain to him, how far off I am from him the most part of my life, how few are the hours of my communion with him, how short is the visit, how much his face is concealed from me, and how far my heart is divided from him. A soul then says, "Surely there is too great a distance between me and my God, my heavenly Father!" and cries out with bitterness, *Why is God so far from me, and why is my heart so far from God?* How often do I wait upon him in his own sanctuary, and among his saints, but I am not favoured with the sight *of his power and glory* there! And how often do I seek him in my secret retirements, but I find him not? I would tell him how often I read his promises in the gospel, and taste no sweetness; I go frequently to those wells of consolation, and they seem to be dry; then *I turn my face and go away ashamed.*

5. I would tell him too of my temporal troubles, if I got near to God, because they unfit me for his service, they make me incapable of honouring him in the world, and render me unfit for enjoying him in his ordinances: I would tell him how they damp my zeal, how they bow my spirit down, and *make me go mourning all the day long*, to the dishonour of christianity, which is a dispensation of grace and joy. Thus I might complain before God of pains, of weakness, of sickness, of the disorders of my flesh; I might complain there too of the weakness of all my powers, the want of memory, the scatterings and confusions that are upon my thoughts, the wanderings of my fancy, and the unhappy influence that a feeble and diseased body has upon the mind: "O my God, how am I divided from thee, by dwelling in such a tabernacle! still patching up a tottering cottage, and wasting my best hours in a painful attendance on the infirmities of the flesh!"

I might then take the liberty of spreading before my God, all the sorrows and vexations of life, that unhinge my soul from its centre, and throw it off from my guard, and hurry and expose me to daily temptations. I might complain of my reproaches from friends and enemies; because these, many times, wear out the spirit, and unfit it for acts of lively worship. These are my weekly sorrows and groans, these are my daily fears and troubles; and these shall be spread before the eyes of my God, in the happy hour when I get near him.

Lastly, I would not go away without a word of pity and complaint concerning my relations, my friends, and acquaintance, that are afar off from God. I would put in one word of petition

for them that are careless and unconcerned for themselves: I would weep a little at the seat of God for them: I would leave a tear or two at the throne of mercy, for my dearest relatives in the flesh, for children, brothers or sisters, that they might be brought near to God, in the bonds of the spirit. Then would I remember my friends in Christ, my brethren and kindred in the gospel; such as labour under heavy burdens, languish under various infirmities of life, or groan under the power of strong temptations. When God indulges me the favour of his ear, I would spread their wants and sorrows before him, together with my own, and make supplication for all the saints. I would leave a petition at the mercy-seat for my native country, that knowledge and holiness may overspread the nation: that our king may be a nursing father to the church, and our princes may be blessings to the land. And while I send up my request for the British islands, I would breathe out many a sigh for Zion, that she may be the joy of the whole earth. I proceed now to,

III. The third head of enquiry, which is this; why does a saint, when he gets near to God, delight to tell him all his circumstances, and all his sorrows?

In general I might say this, because it is so seldom, at least in our day, that a saint gets very near to God; therefore, when he finds that happy minute, he says to his God all that he wants to say: he tells him all his heart, he pours out all his wants before him; because these seasons are very few. It is but here and there an extraordinary christian, who maintains constant nearness to God: The best complain of too much distance and estrangement. But to descend to particulars:

1. He is our chief friend, and it is an ease to the soul to vent itself in the bosom of a friend, when we are in his company.—More especially as it was in the case of Job, when other friends failed him when he had begun to tell them some of his sorrows, and withal maintained his own integrity; they would not believe him, but became his troublers instead of his comforters: *My friends scorn me*, says Job, *chap.* xvi. 20. *but mine eye poureth out tears unto God.* I go to my best friend, my friend in heaven, when my friends here on earth neglect me.

Man is a sociable creature, and our joys and our sorrow are made to be communicated, that thereby we may double the one, and alleviate the other. There is scarce any piece of human nature, be it never so stupid, but feels some satisfaction in the pleasure of a friend, in communicating the troubles and the pleasures that it feels; but those that have God for their highest and best friend, they love to be often exercising such acts of friendship with him; and rather with him than with any friend besides, ra-

ther with him than with all besides him. This is the noblest and highest friendship; all condescension and compassion on the one side, and all infirmity and dependence on the other, and yet both joined in mutual satisfaction. Amazing grace of God to man! The christian rejoices in this admirable divine indulgence, and delights in all opportunities to employ and improve it.

Besides, this is the way to maintain the vigour of piety, and keep all the springs of divine love ever opening and flowing in his own; therefore he makes many a visit to the mercy-seat, and takes occasion from every troublesome occurrence in life, to betake himself to his knees, and improves every sorrow he meets on earth, to increase his acquaintance with heaven. He delights to talk all his grievances over with his God. Hannah, the mother of Samuel, is a blessed example of this practice; 1 *Sam.* i. 10. When she was in bitterness of soul, by reason of a sore affliction, and the teazing humour of her rival, she prayed to the Lord, and wept sore: and when she had left her sorrows at the mercy-seat, she went away, and did did eat, and her countenance was no more sad; *ver.* 18. So saith the christian, "I commit my sorrows to my God; he is my best friend, and I go away, and am no more sad: I have poured out my cares into his ear, and cast my burdens upon him, and leave them there in peace."

2. The saint knows God will understand him right, and will judge right concerning his case and his meaning. Though the expressions, it may be, are very imperfect, below the common language of men, and propriety of speech, yet God knows the meaning of the soul; for it is his own spirit that breathes in that soul, and he *knows the mind of his Spirit;* Rom. viii. 27. The friends of Job perverted his sense: Therefore he turns aside to God, for he knows God would understand him. It is a very great advantage, when we spread our concerns before another person, to be well assured that person will take us right, will take in our meaning fully, and judge aright concerning our cause. Now we may be assured of this, when we speak to our God: he *knows our thoughts afar off,* and all circumstances, better infinitely than we can tell him. These our poor imperfect expressions of our wants, shall be no hinderances to his full supplies, nor any bar to his exercise of friendship towards us.

3. A saint pours out his soul before God, because he is sure of secrecy there. How many things are there transacted between God and a holy soul, that relate to guilt and inward workings of iniquity, that he could never publish to the world! and many things also that concern his conduct in life, his embarrassments of spirit, his difficulties his follies, or the obstinacy, guilt, or

follies of his friends or relatives, which prudence and shame forbid him to tell his fellow-creatures; and yet he wants to spread them all before God his best friend, God his dearest relative, the friend nearest to his heart. There may be many circumstances and cases in life, especially in the spiritual life, which one christian could hardly communicate to another, though under the strictest bonds and ties of natural, and civil, and sacred relation: But we may communicate these very affairs, these secret concerns with our God, and unburden our souls of every care without the least public notice.

We cannot be perfectly secure of this with regard to any creature; for when we have experienced the faithfulness of a friend many years, he may possibly be at last unfaithful: Unfaithfulness is mingled with our nature since the fall, and it is impossible any person can be infallibly secure from it: *Ps.* lxii. 9. *Men of low degree are vanity, and great men are a lie:* but we may leave our case with our God, as secure as though we had communicated it to none: Nay, we may be easily secure and free in speaking, because God knows all before-hand. Our complaint adds nothing to his knowledge, although it eases our souls, and gives us sweet satisfaction in having such a friend to speak to.

4. A saint believes the equity, faithfulness, and the love of God; therefore he spreads his case before him. His equity, that *the judge of all the earth will do right; the righteous may plead with him.* His faithfulness, that he will fulfil all his promises: and his love, that he will take compassion on those who are afflicted; he will be tender to those who are miserable. David takes occasion from this, to address God under his sufferings and sorrows; *Ps.* lxii. 1, 2. *He is my rock, and my salvation, and my defence, I shall not be moved; therefore my soul waits upon God; my refuge is in him.* lxv. 1, 2. *He is a God that hears prayer, therefore unto him shall all flesh come.* God will not account our complaints troublesome, though they be never so often repeated; whereas men are quickly wearied with the importunities of those who are poor and needy. Great men are ready to shut their doors against those who come too often for relief; but God delights to hear often from his people, and to have them ask continually at his door for mercy. Though he has Almighty power with him, saith Job, *yet he will not plead against me with his great power: No, but he would put strength in me;* he would teach me how I should answer him; how I should answer his justice, by appeals to his mercy; and how I should speak prevailingly before him.

5. *Lastly,* A saint tells God all his circumstances and sorrows at such a season, because he hopes for relief from him, and from him only; for it is impossible creatures can give relief under any

trouble, unless God makes them instruments of relief. And there are some troubles in which creatures cannot be our helpers, but our help must come only from God, and that in a more immediate way. Whatsoever be our distress, whether it arise from past guilt, and the torments of an anxious and troubled conscience; or whether it arise from the working of in-dwelling sin, the strength of temptation, or the violence of temporal afflictions, still God is able and willing to give relief, *Call upon me*, saith the Lord, *In the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me*; Ps. l. 15. *And he hath never said to the seed of Jacob, seek ye my face in vain*; Is. xlv. 19.

IV. The fourth general head of discourse which I proposed is to shew, How a saint, near the mercy-seat, pleads with God for relief.

Holy Job tells us in this text, that if he was got near to the seat of God, *he would fill his mouth with arguments*. Not as though he would inform God of the necessity, or the justice of his cause beyond what he knew before; no, this is impossible. *He that teacheth man all things, shall he not know?* Ps. xciv. 9, 10. He who orders all the circumstances of our lives, and every stroke of his own rod, can he be unacquainted with any thing that relates to our sorrows? Nor can we use arguments with God to awaken his ear, or move his compassion, as though he had neglected us, or forgotten our distress; for *all things are* for ever *naked and open* before *the eyes of him, with whom we have to do*; Heb. iv. 13. The Shepherd of Israel cannot slumber nor does his mercy want our awakenings.

But in this sort of expressions, the great God condescends to talk, and to transact affairs with us, and permits us to treat him in a way suited to our weakness: He would have us plead and argue with him, that we may shew how deep a sense we have of our own wants, and how entirely we depend on his mercy. Since we cannot converse with him in a way equal to his own majesty and godhead, he stoops to talk with us in such a way as is most agreeable to our state, and most easy to our apprehension: He speaks such language as we can understand, and invites us to humble conference with him in the same way. *Come*, says God to his people, by Isaiah his prophet, *Come now, and let us reason together*; Is. i. 18. And he often, in holy scripture, represents himself as moved and influenced by the prayers and pleadings of his afflicted saints; and he has ordained, before-hand, that the day *when he prepares their hearts to pray*, shall be the day when his *ear shall hear the desire of the humble*, and shall be the season of their deliverance; *Ps.* x. 17.

If you enquire, how a christian pleads with his God, and whence does he borrow his arguments? I answer, that accord-

ng to the various sorrows and difficulties which attend him, so various may his pleadings be for the removal of them. There is not a circumstance which belongs to his affliction, but he may draw some argument from it to plead for mercy; there is not one attribute of the divine nature, but he may use it with holy skill, and thereby plead for grace; there is not one relation in which God stands to his people, nor one promise of his covenant, but may at some time or other, afford an argument in prayer. But the strongest and sweetest argument that a christian knows, is the name and mediation of Jesus Christ his Lord. It is for the sake of Christ, who has purchased all the blessings of the covenant, that a saint hopes to receive them; and for the sake of Christ, he pleads that God would bestow them.

But having treated largely on this subject, in my discourse, intitled, *A Guide to Prayer*, I shall not repeat the same things here, but refer the reader to the first chapter of that book, sect. —It remains that I make a few useful reflections on the whole foregoing discourse.

Reflection I. What a dull and uncomfortable thing is religion, without drawing near to God! for this is the very business for which religion is designed; the end and aim of religion is getting nigh to God; if it attain not this end, it is nothing.

O the madness of hypocrites, who satisfy themselves to toil in long forms of worship, and appear perpetually in the shape of religion, but unconcerned whether they ever get near to God by it or no! They lose the end and design for which religion was made. What if we know all the doctrines of the gospel; what if we can talk rationally about natural religion; what if we can deduce one truth from another, so as to spread a whole scheme of godliness before the eyes or ears of those we converse with; what if we can prove all the points of christianity, and give incontestible arguments for the belief of them; yet we have no religion, if our souls never get near to God by them. A saint thinks it a very melancholy thing when he is at a distance from God, and cannot tell God his wants and sorrows. Though he be never so much studied in divinity, and the deep things of God, yet if God be not with him, if he does not come near to his mercy-seat, so as to converse with him as his friend, the soul is concerned, and grieved, and never rests till this distance be removed. It is to little purpose that we get into churches, join in the fellowship of the gospel, and attend many seasons of prayer: It is to very little purpose to read chapters, and to hear sermons, one day after another: It is to little purpose all these forms are maintained, if we have not the substance and power

of godliness? if our God be not *near us*, if we never *get near to God.*

Reflection II. How happy are we under the gospel, above all ages and nations besides us, and before us! For we have advantages of getting near to God, beyond what any other religion has; above what the heathen world ever enjoyed; for their light of nature could never shew them the throne of grace: above what the ancient patriarchs had, though God came down in visible shapes, and revealed and discovered himself to them as a man or an angel: above what the Jews had, though God dwelt among them in visible glory, in the holy of holies. The people were kept at a distance, and the high-priests were to come thither but once a year; and their veil, and smokes, and shadows, did, as it were, conceal God from them, althoogh they were types of a future Messiah; and even their *shekinah* itself, or cloud of glory, gave them no spiritual idea or notion of godhead, though it was a shining emblem of God dwelling among them.

We have better ordinances, and brighter mediums of converse with God; we have more powerful assistances to raise us heaven-ward; we have the Messiah, the Emmanuel; that is, *God in flesh*, God come near us, that we may get near to him; we have the *promise of the Spirit*, which is one of the glorious privileges of the gospel; *Eph.* ii. 13, 18. *Ye who sometimes were afar off, are made nigh through the blood of Christ: and through him—have we access by one Spirit to the Father.* Through Christ Jesus, and the purchase of his blood, and the working of his Spirit, we approach to the Father, we are brought near to God.

And this very method, *viz.* the atonement of the blood of Christ, and the working of the Spirit by which we are brought near to God in our first conversion, are the ways by which we must draw near him in duty ever afterward: it is by the same atonement, and by the same Spirit. We are continually contracting fresh guilt, and were it not for the perpetuity of the virtue of that sacrifice, our guilt would be an irremovable bar against our coming near to God daily and hourly; and after every new sin, were it not for that Spirit, we could never get near to God again: but that Spirit is promised *to abide with us*; John xiv. 16. and in *Heb.* iv. 14, 16. *Christ is passed into the heavens*, is very near to God, and hath shewn us the way thither; Heb. x. 19, 20. *Having therefore boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith.*

O how should we value our acquaintance with Christ, and pray earnestly for his Spirit! one makes a way for our coming near to God, and the other actually brings us near. How glorious would churches be, if there were more of this Spirit poured

down upon us! When an assembly of saints, all joining together in one act of worship, shall at once rise by the same Spirit, and approach to the mercy-seat, and order their cause before God; what might not such a worshipping assembly obtain at the hands of God? What beauty would appear in the worship of christians then? What glory would be found in a society of saints, if this Spirit were but there? Christianity has had these ornaments, and these honours: let us pray that God would restore them again.

Reflection III. This doctrine will not suffer us to confine ourselves or others, merely to a set prescribed form of words in prayer. For as the cases and concerns of soul or body, which we spread before God, are almost infinitely various, so must we express those cases and concerns before God in proper words, and plead for relief with a variety of arguments, as the Spirit of God shall assist us: *I would order my own cause before him*, says Job, *and my mouth shall be filled with arguments.* It is not possible that a Prayer Book should be drawn up with forms particularly suited to every complaint, and every sorrow, that a holy soul wants to pour out, and spread before the mercy-seat. And the christian, that knows the pleasure of getting near to God in prayer, cannot content himself to wrap up all his special and dearest concernments in a few general sentences.

"What! when I am brought so nigh to my God, my Almighty and compassionate friend; when I am taken, as it were, by the hand, and led into his secret place; when I have the ear of God so near me, shall I not tell him my secret and particular grievances? When I feel such a sweet freedom of soul in his presence, shall I not unbosom my whole self to him? Shall I check the devout appetites and affections of my heart, because I do not find words in my Prayer Book fit to express them? Shall I quench the blessed Spirit thus, and limit my converse with God?"

I allow forms of prayer well composed, to be useful helps for younger or meaner christians; or, indeed, for all persons, when the spirits are low and languishing, and the heart in a heavy or cold temper: But at such a glorious season to confine a holy soul to a few good expressions, written down before, how great an injury would it be to its divine pleasure and profit?

Reflection IV. How comfortable a consideration may be drawn from my discourse, by those that have never a friend upon earth, that there is a friend in heaven, to whom they may tell all their circumstances, and all their sorrows! There are some persons, in this world, so mean and so wretched, that they are ready to think, at least, that they have never a friend, and are

apt to complain that they are altogether friendless. But there is a God, one that they may be sure is their everlasting friend, when they are willing to enter into a state of friendship with him: when they have commenced friendship with him by the blood of Jesus the great Reconciler, and by the working of the reconciling Spirit; then let them improve this consideration with sweet joy. They have a friend in heaven, before whom they can spread all their sorrows, though they be friendless on earth; though they are forced to say of their souls, "There is no refuge for them in the world," yet they can say, *God is their refuge:* They can express to him their various sufferings, and their several difficulties, and they can be sure of a helper in heaven.

Reflection V. *Lastly,* That future state of glory must be blessed indeed, where we shall be ever near to God, even to his seat, and have no sorrows to tell him of. If it be so delightful a thing to come near the seat of God here upon earth, to mourn before him, and to tell him all our circumstances, and all our sorrows; how pleasurable a blessedness must that of heaven be, where we shall be ever rejoicing before him, as Christ Jesus was before the world was made, *rejoicing daily before him;* and our *delight* shall be with that God who created *the sons of men:* Where we shall be for ever telling him our joys, and our pleasures, with humble adoration of his grace, and everlasting gratitude. It will be a sweet redoubling of all the delights and enjoyments of heaven, to tell him, in the language of that world, what infinite satisfaction we feel in his society; what enjoyments and delights we derive from his immediate influences; how full our hearts are of love to him, and how full they are of the sense of his love: There his love communicated to us, shall be, as it were, reflected back again from our souls to God; and in the perpetual communications and reflections of knowledge, joy, and love shall our heaven consist.

O that I could raise your souls, and mine, to blessed breathings after this felicity, by such representations. But how infinitely short must the brightest description fall of this state and place: May you and I, who speak and hear this, may every soul of us be made thus happy one day, and learn the extent and glory of this blessedness, by sweet and everlasting experience. *Amen.*

HYMN FOR SERMON VI.

Sins and Sorrows spread before God.

O that I knew the secret place,
Where I might find my God!
I'd spread my wants before his face,
And pour my woes abroad.

I'd tell him how my sins arise,
What sorrows I sustain;
How grace decays, and comfort dies,
And leaves my heart in pain.

I'd say, "How flesh and sense rebel!
What inward foes combine
With the vain world, and powers of hell,
To vex this soul of mine!"

He knows what arguments I'd take,
To wrestle with my God;
I'd plead for his own mercy's sake,
And for my Saviour's blood.

My God will pity my complaints,
And heal my broken bones:
He takes the meaning of his saints,
The language of their groans.

Arise, my soul, from deep distress,
And banish every fear;
He calls thee to his throne of grace,
To spread thy sorrows there,

SERMON VII.

A Hopeful Youth falling Short of Heaven.

MARK x. 21.—Then Jesus beholding him, loved him.

THE FIRST PART.

IF we would know the person who was favoured with the love of Jesus, and be acquainted with his character, it is necessary to read the whole narrative, as we find it delivered in this chapter, from the 17th to the 23d verse.

And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? 18. *And Jesus said unto him, why callest thou me good, there is none good save one, that is God.* 19. *Thou knowest the commandments; do not commit adultery, do not kill, do not steal, do not bear false witness, defraud not, honour thy father and mother.* 20. *And he answered, and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth.* 21. *Then Jesus beholding him, loved him, and said unto him, one thing thou lackest, go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come take up the cross, and follow me.* 22. *And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved; for he had great possessions.* 23. *And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, how hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God?*

Now if we consult and compare the account which the other evangelists give us of this transaction, we shall find that the person was a *young man*; Mat. xix. 20. and a *ruler among the Jews*; Luke xviii. 18. He had some concern upon his mind about his future state, and came to Christ, as to a divine prophet, to enquire the way to heaven: But it is evident he had a vain conceit of his own righteousness, and at the same time he had an excessive love to money; he would fain have been an heir of heaven, but he valued his inheritance on earth much more: He wished for the love of God, but would enjoy and love this world too; and rather than renounce the pleasant things of this life, he would quit his pretences to a life to come; for he went away grieved and full of sadness, at the direction which our Saviour gave him, and would not venture the experiment.

He forsook Christ and heaven, having great possessions on earth.

It is necessary to our purpose, to know whether, in the following years of his life, he was brought to repentance and salvation, though it is most likely that he never was; for if he loved his estate and his money, so well in his younger years, that vice probably increased with his age. Besides, he stands in the history of the gospel, as an example of those men, who lose heaven for the love of money. But howsoever it might be afterward, this is certain, that at that time he was in the state of sin and death; which is sufficient to my present design.

From the words of my text, set in this light, and compared with the issue of the whole conversation, between Christ and this young man, we may derive this doctrine:

Doct. Our Saviour had some love for a person that preferred this world to heaven, and neglected his salvation.

In order to improve this thought, we shall consider.

I. What is meant by the love of our Saviour to this young man, and to persons of his character.—II. What was there in him that might attract our Saviour's love.—III. What remarks may be made upon the sin and folly of a person so lovely, and so beloved of Christ.—IV. Make an address to three sorts of persons, taking the occasion from the character of the person in my text.

First, What is meant by the love of our Saviour to this young man, and how far may he be said to love a person who is void of true grace, and neglects salvation.

Here, I conceive, we are not to look upon our Lord Jesus Christ as acting according to his divinity, but only in his human nature; for it is evident that Christ considered as God, loved him not in that sense in which the love of God is usually taken; for he had plain evidences of a worldly covetous mind, and so could not be the object of special divine complacency: Nor do we find that Christ loved him so well, as to communicate divine grace and salvation to him.

I confess there may be some sort of love attributed to God, with relation to creatures of any kind, which have any thing valuable in them: So God loves all the works of his hands; so he loves the heavens and the earth, and all the pieces of inanimate nature: that is, he approves his own workmanship, the effects of his own wisdom and power. God is also sometimes said to love those to whom he communicates temporal blessings, or makes the offer of eternal ones. So he loved the whole nation of the Jews, though he did not give all of them his saving grace. But still it is much more natural to expound the words of my text

concerning Christ as man; for there were some peculiar qualities in this youth, which were suited to attract the love of human nature; such qualities as a wise and perfect man could not but love: It was some such sort of love as our Lord expressed toward the apostle John, in a way of distinction from the rest; upon which account, probably, he was called, *the disciple whom Jesus loved*; John xiii. 23. Therefore I conceive Christ is here represented as exerting the innocent and kind affections of human nature towards a youth so agreeable and hopeful.

Now this love implies in it these five things:

1. A hearty approbation of those good qualities which Christ beheld in him: For he being perfect and wise, cannot but approve that which is excellent. He had a sharp eye, and great sagacity of nature: With a ready penetration he could discern what was valuable; and must necessarily have a just esteem for every thing wherein his Father's wisdom and power did eminently appear. Whatsoever God created at first, was good; *Gen.* i. 31. And whatsoever remains of that good workmanship of God, Christ, the Son of God, approved still, so far as it was untainted with sin, and considered in itself, abstracted from the criminal qualities that might attend it.

2. This love of Christ to the young man, implies a complacency in his person; a sort of human delight in a fellow-creature that had several excellent properties; though the love of God, and powerful religion, were wanting. If I read a book that has much good sense in it, and where the reasonings are well connected, I cannot but have a delight in reading, though the subject itself may be trifling, or the theme disagreeable. If I hear an oration well composed, with many ingenious turns of thought and pathetic expressions; and all these pronounced with the various decencies of speech and gesture, I take pleasure in the performance, and may love the orator, though he insist upon sentiments quite contrary to my own. So I may be pleased with the learned conversation of a knowing and well-tempered man, and love him so far, though he may be my enemy, and perhaps, in his heart, an enemy to God too; for such was this young man, an idolater of gold, and therefore an enemy to God; *Jam.* iv. 4. concerning whom it is written, that *Jesus loved him.*

3. Some natural good-wishes for his welfare are implied in this love. There is in every wise and good man, a hearty desire of the happiness of his fellow-creatures, he loves them all in this sense, even the foolish and the wicked. Human nature that has any goodness in it, is ready to wish well to any person, though he be an utter stranger, and unknown; especially if he has some agreeable qualities. There may be an innocent inclination to

see all men happy, though we know this shall not be brought to pass; for the word of God declares that most part of men walk in the broad-way, and shall go down to hell. You know how passionately St. Paul longed for the salvation of all his countrymen the Jews. This is called a love of benevolence; and it is evident by the following particulars, that the Lord expressed this good-will towards the young man in my text.

4. A conferring of actual benefit or kindness, is implied in the love of Christ towards this youth; for he stood still and entertained him with friendly discourse: He endeavoured by proper methods to convince him of sin; he gave him directions what he should do to obtain treasure in heaven; he called him to be his disciple and follower; and gave him a promise of everlasting riches, if he would have complied with his proposal. This is called a love of beneficence: And this our Lord Jesus practised abundantly, even to those whom he did not savingly enlighten and convert by his gospel; for it was his character, that he went about doing good; Acts x. 38.

5. This love of Christ includes in it compassion for the young man, and some degree of sorrow to think that he should miss of heaven; that he should be so hardened in self-confidence, so puft up with a conceit of his own righteousness, and so hard to be convinced of his weakness and guilt, as to stand to it boldly, that he had kept all the commandments of God: and at last, that he should be so entangled with a love to money, as to despise the treasures of heaven, and to let Christ and salvation go. Such a mournful pity did our Lord express to Jerusalem, in the days of his flesh; O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee: How often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!* Luke xiii. 34. And he mingled the tears of love and sorrow when he came near the gates: for the same evangelist tells us, that *he beheld the city and wept over it*, with this melting language, *If thou hadst know, even thou, in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace; but now they are hid from thine eyes*; Luke xix. 41, 42.

When we behold a noble palace, a well-contrived garden, a piece of painting of uncommon art: "It is pity, we cry, that such a building should be reduced to ashes, such a garden overspread with desolation and disorder, or such a picture be all defaced." We have a sort of pity for these inanimate beauties, and we are ready to mourn their danger or ruin. And the passion is innocent and becoming: But the grief and the love rise higher still, when we see a living soul, a fellow-creature of our own rank, a man or woman dressed in agreeable accomplishments, and yet making haste to wilful destruction. Such love and such grief are

comely for a wise and good man, and they became our Saviour well. Blessed Saviour! that ever thy love should lay itself out on such objects, as would awaken thy grief, and give thee so painful a compassion! But this was only in the days of his flesh: He pities mankind now under their various wretchedness and folly, yet we cannot suppose his present exaltation and blessedness does indulge real sorrow, or admit any smarting affliction; though in his humble state on earth, his human love expressed itself agreeably in such mournful compassion and tenderness.

II. We come to consider, what there was in this person that might attract our Saviour's love.

1. He had probably some natural qualifications which were agreeable and pleasing. His youth is expressed; Mat. xix. 20. A young man, in the prime of his days, in the force and flower of his age, the beauty and vigour of his nature: And it is very likely, that he might be of a comely figure and ingenuous countenance; for it is said, our Saviour beholding him, loved him. He fixed his eyes, and probably saw something in him delightful in his very aspect and appearance, which might partly induce him to those various expressions of love before-mentioned, and to pity so lovely a youth, who was enslaved to riches, and bound to destruction in fetters of gold.

2. He had a courteous and obliging carriage, which appears in several instances; viz. he kneeled before our Lord, and paid him great respect with the gesture of his body; he saluted him, good Master! which our Lord did not reprove, when he said, there is none good but God; but put him to the trial, whether he would own him to be God or no. He acknowledged Christ as his superior, though he was so much a stranger to him, and so much a poorer man than himself. By his whole deportment we find him a person of great civility; he knew how to pay the honours of his country well, to give titles to whom titles are due, and to do these things gracefully. A courteous, humble, and decent behaviour, without affectation or flattery, is so far from being reproved by Christ, that not only, in this place, our Lord seems to be pleased with it, but in many places of the New Testament, it is recommended to make christianity amiable: It is pleasing to human nature, and cannot but gain love and esteem with all wise and virtuous persons.

3. He was religiously educated even from his childhood, and had grown up in sobriety, perhaps, from his very cradle; for he was but a young man when he came to our Lord, and yet he says, concerning the commandments of moral duty, I have kept them all from my youth. He sprung surely from good parents; he had such instructions from them, and they such a jealous and

watchful eye over him, that he was kept from gross sins, and was brought up in all the forms of godliness, and in the observance of the moral law. Now Christ, considered merely as a man, loved the law of God so well, that he could not but take pleasure in a person that performed it, so far as that obedience reached. Virtue, in the mere outward part of it, will command respect even from the vile and the wicked: much more will the good and pious man pay honour to the practice of it. There is something amiable in sobriety, temperance, charity, justice, truth, and sincerity, though they may not proceed from the divinest principle of love to God rooted in the heart.

4. He had given some diligence in seeking after eternal life, and had a great concern about his soul. He came running to ask a question of the biggest importance, *What shall I do to inherit eternal life?* He was convinced there was a heaven and a hell, and he was willing to do something here to obtain happiness hereafter. He did not come with a design to put curious and ensnaring questions, as the Sadducees did; Mat. xxii. 23. but he seems to have an honest design to know the way to heaven and happiness, for he went away sorrowful when he could not comply with the demands of Christ. Though he thought he had practised a great deal of religion, yet he was willing to receive further instructions; *What lack I yet?* Is there any other precept to be performed, in order to entitle me to life eternal? Now our Saviour loves to see conscience awakened, to see the springs of religion opened and beginning to flow: A divine teacher conceives some hope of a man that is willing to be taught, and ready to learn, and therefore he loves him. This youth thought himself righteous, yet he did not think himself all-wise; and therefore submits to farther instructions. Now it is a pleasure to communicate knowledge to those that long to receive it; and we pity them heartily when they do not comply with the necessary duties that are revealed to them, through the charms of some strong temptation.

5. Add to all this, that he had many civil advantages by reason of his riches, his authority, and his power. He was wealthy, and he was a ruler among the people; which things, though they cannot in themselves make any person amiable, yet when they are added to the former good qualities, they render them all more lovely and more valuable; and that because they are so seldom joined together. Dr. Goodman remarks very ingeniously here, "that his concern about his soul, was not a sick-bed meditation, for he was in health; nor a melancholy qualm of old age, for he was young: nor was it the effect of his being discontented and out of humour with the world, for he was rich and pros-

perous." It is seldom that we see a man in the prime of his days, possessing large treasures and dominions in this world, that will seek after the things of another; or that will shew due respect to his fellow-creatures, or practise so much as the form of godliness: that when all these meet together, as they did in this young man, they conspire to make him lovely in the eyes of every beholder. But alas! this unhappy youth, furnished, as he was with all these virtues, and these advantages, which our Lord beheld in him, and for which he loved him, yet he lost heaven for the love of this world. He refused to accept the proposals of Christ; he went away sorrowful, for he had large possessions. And this naturally leads me to the third head.

[If this sermon be too long, it may be divided here.]

III. Some remarks upon this mixed character; upon the folly, the guilt, and misery of a man so lovely, and so beloved of Christ.

1st Remark. How much good and evil may be mingled in the same person? what lovely qualities were found in this young man! and yet there was found in him a carnal mind in love with this world, and in a state of secret enmity to God. Our nature at first was a glorious composition of all that was good. How has sin ruined human nature from its primitive glory, and mingled a large measure of evil in its very frame! and yet how has restraining grace kept our nature from losing every thing that is good and valuable, and from becoming universally monstrous and loathsome!

Let us take a survey of the world, and see what a mixture there is of amiable and hateful qualities amongst the children of men. There is beauty and comeliness; there is vigour and vivacity; there is good-humour and compassion; there is wit and judgment, and industry, even amongst those that are profligate and abandoned to many vices. There is sobriety, and love, and honesty, and justice, and decency amongst men that know not God, and believe not the gospel of our Lord Jesus. There are very few of the sons and daughters of Adam, but are possessed of something good and agreeable, either by nature or acquirement; therefore, when there is a necessary occasion to mention the vices of any man, I should not speak evil of him in the gross, nor heap reproaches on him by wholesale. It is very disingenuous to talk scandal in superlatives, as though every man who was a sinner, was a perfect villain, the very worst of men, all over hateful and abominable.

How sharply should our own thoughts reprove us, when we give our pride and malice a loose, to ravage over all the character of our neighbours, and deny all that is good concerning them,

because they have something in them that is criminal and worthy of blame! Thus our judgment is abused by our passions; and sometimes this folly reigns in us to such a degree that we can hardly allow a man to be wise or ingenious, to have a grain of good sense, or good humour, that is not of our profession, or our party, in matters of church or state. Let us look back upon our conduct, and blush to think that we should indulge such prejudices, such a sinful partiality.

2d Remark. A man that has not true grace, nor holiness, may be the just object of our love: for we find several instances and several degrees of love were paid by Christ, the wisest and best of men, to a youth of a covetous and carnal temper! one who preferred earth to heaven, and valued his present possessions above those eternal treasures that Christ had promised him.

I confess, under the Old Testament, in the cxxxix. Psalm, ver. 21, 22. David appeals to God, *do not I hate them, that hate thee?* and adds, *I hate them with a perfect hatred.* But this need not be construed to signify any malice in his heart against them, as a private person; but his design to fight against them, and suppress them, as a soldier, and a king, because they appeared publicly against God; for he adds, I am grieved at those that rise up against thee, I count them mine enemies. Besides, these persons were of so abandoned a character, that they seem to have had nothing good in them; and he might justly hate them, considered merely as sinners, in the same sense that we must hate ourselves, so far as we are sinful. I might add to all this, that they were cruel and bloody with regard to men, and they spoke wickedly against God, and were God's professed enemies, ver. 19. and 20. After all, it was much more allowable in David the Jew in the heat of his zeal, to talk thus, than it can be for us, christians; while we read the words of our Saviour, Mat. v. 43, 44, 45. We *have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy: But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you: that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust:* While we consider also in what a divine manner our Lord Jesus has exemplified his own precept, and has loved many of his enemies, so as to die for them; and manifested so much natural affection, even for the young sinner in my text, because there were some good qualities found in him.

I will not say therefore within myself concerning any man,

"I hate him utterly, and abhor him in all respects, because he has not true holiness:" but I will look upon him, and consider whether there may not be some accomplishment in him, some moral virtue, some valuable talent, some natural or acquired excellency; and I will not neglect to pay due esteem to every deserving quality, wheresoever I find it. It is a piece of honour due to God our Creator, to observe the various signatures of his wisdom, that he has impressed upon his creatures, and the overflowing treasures of his goodness, which he has distributed among the works of his hands.

Thus I may very justly love a man, for whom, in the vulgar sense, I have no charity; that is, such a one as I believe to be in a state of sin and death, and have no present hope of his salvation. How could holy parents fulfil their duties of affection to their wicked children? or pious children pay due respect to sinful parents? How could a believer fulfil the law of love to an unbelieving brother, or a dearer relative, if we ought to admit of no love to persons that are in a state of enmity to God? How can we be followers of God as dear children, if we are not kind to the unthankful, and to the evil; Luke vi. 37. To those who have nothing of serious religion in them; Gal. vi. 10. "As we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, especially to them who are of the household of faith.

As God has a peculiar love for his own children, for those who are renewed, and sanctified, and formed into his likeness; so ought we to love all the saints with a peculiar kind of affection, and take special delight in them, we should express a love of intimate fellowship unto them; a love of divine friendship, of spiritual pleasure, and hearty communion; rejoicing together with them in God our common Father, in Christ Jesus our common Head, and in the hope of our common Salvation; and we should ever be ready, in the first place, to assist and support them, and supply their wants according to the calls of providence. But sinners also must have some share in our love.

3d Remark. How different is the special love of God, from the natural love of man! God seeth not as man seeth; he appoints not persons to eternal life, because of some agreeable accomplishments which they possess in this life. Jesus Christ himself, considered as God, did not bestow his special and saving love upon that young Israelite, whom, as man, he could not help loving. So Samuel was sent to chuse a king for the Jews, among the sons of Jesse; 1 Sam. xvi. 6. When he saw Eliab appear, he looked on him, and said, "Surely the Lord's anointed is before him; but the Lord said to Samuel, ver. 7. Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature, because I have refused him." Old Jesse, it may be, was ready to look upon

his eldest son too, being pleased with his tall and comely figure, and to say within himself, "It is a pity that Eliab was not made a king." But David was God's beloved.

If the question were put to us, Who are the persons that are fit to stand in the court of God above, to be the inhabitants and ornaments of heaven? We should be ready to say, the beautiful and the ingenious, the souls of a sweet disposition, and the persons of graceful behaviour. We are tempted to think that the well-born, the wise, the affable, and the well-accomplished, should all be made saints, and the favourites of God; but he sees with other eyes, he determines his special love by other principles, and makes another sort of distinction by his sovereign saving grace, unguided and unallured by the merit of man. 1 Cor. i. 26, 27, 28, 29. "Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world, to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen: yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are, that no flesh should glory in his presence."

What would become of the morose, the rough natural tempers, if God loved none but such as were lovely in our eyes? What would become of all the deformed and the most uncomely pieces of human nature; the clownish, and the weak, and base things of this world, if God should chuse none but the fair, and the well-bred, the well-figured, and the honourable? If this were the rule of his conduct, what dismal distinction would light upon thousands, and some good men too, who must wear in their faces, in this world, the dreadful sentence of their damnation in the next? But the great and sovereign God acts by other measures; he lays down to himself divine rules, that are to us unknown, and must be for ever unsearchable.

Some, who are endowed with native excellencies, he adorns with heavenly graces, and they shine as jewels set in rings of gold: Others, who have scarce any thing in them amiable by nature, are the objects of divine love, and made vessels of grace; though these do never make so charming an appearance among men. Moses the meek and obliging, Jonah the rough and the peevish, were both beloved of God; for he made saints and prophets of them. Abraham the rich, and Sarah the beautiful; Peter the poor fisherman, and Paul the man of mean aspect, and contemptible figure; were all beloved of God, and made heirs of eternal Life. The conduct of the great God, in this matter, is so various, and his reasons so sublime and impenetrable, that it is in vain for us to attempt to trace out his rules of action.

Sometimes he chuses a man of great intellectual powers, and sets an invisible mark of divine love upon him: At another time he takes pleasure to pour contempt on all the pride of human reason, by chusing a foolish man, and making him an humble believer. Sometimes he exalts the man of natural virtue into a saint; and again, he spreads shame and confusion over all our own pretended righteousnesses and vain confidence, by culling out, here and there, a profane wretch, and converting him to faith and holiness, and in the mean time he leaves some that are sober, and have many human virtues, and good appearances, to perish with the Pharisee and the hypocrite for ever, in their pride and self-righteousness. Jesus, the Man, looked upon this pretty youth that was well-born, sober, and virtuous, and he loved him; but the eternal God chose him not for a saint, for he suffered him to run madding after his many possessions, and to despise heaven. Here it becomes us to be silent and adore. O the depths of divine counsel! O the awful and glorious sovereignty of the grace of God, that could pass by so desirable a person, whom the man Jesus could not look upon without pity and love! *How unsearchable are his ways, and his judgments past finding out*; Rom. xi. 33.

Now though this be a very painful and tremendous meditation, yet there is an excellent use to be made of it. No man should despair of salvation, and the love of God, how mean and despicable soever his appearance be among men, or how remote soever from all that we call lovely. Let him forsake all sin and be happy for ever. Nor should the most amiable of creatures, in the natural or civil world, flatter themselves that they are upon that account beloved of God, and shall certainly be partakers of eternal blessings in the world of glory. Let them follow Christ, and be saved.

But I would dwell upon this last thought a little, and therefore I shall propose my fourth remark in this manner.

4th Remark. Many lovely accomplishments, joined together, will not carry a natural man to heaven. The finest composition of beauty and youth, strength and riches, and all this embellished with many forms of godliness, and some shining outward virtues, will not obtain eternal life. The man that is thus qualified and adorned, if he prefers earth to heaven, and loves the possessions of this world, above spiritual treasures, abides in a state of condemnation and death. Grace is not a flower that grows in the field of nature, nor is it made by the heart of man: it is a divine seed; it is planted in our hearts by the Spirit of God; *John* i. 13. The saints *are born not of blood*; that is, by natural generation: *nor of the will of the flesh*, that is, by our own powers of nature; *nor of the will of man*; that is, by the influence that others have over us: *but of God*.

A man may set himself to work awhile for the good of his soul, and yet may miss of salvation: *Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leads to life, and few there be that find it;* Mat. vii. 14. And *many which seek to enter in, shall not be able;* Luke xiii. 24, They seek, but not with all their might: they are not willing to forsake all for heaven, and therefore they obtain it not: they seek, perhaps, with diligence for a season, and give out before they have attained; they tire, and grow weary, and lose the prize: they seek, but not in God's appointed way, and according to the rules of the gospel; and no wonder if their labour be vain; for *he that striveth is not crowned, except he strive lawfully;* 2 Tim. ii. 5. And this was the case of the rich young man; he sought eternal life, but not with all his soul, for he could not take up his cross and follow Christ; he sought the kingdom of God for a season; but when he came to the hard work of self-denial, he would not venture into that thorny path, but turned back, and *went away sorrowful.* He sought justification and peace with God, but not in a right way; for being *ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish his own, he fell short of the righteousness of God,* and attained it not; *Rom.* x. 3. He loved heaven well, but he loved this earth better: he chose his portion and happiness in this world, and lost his soul.

The eye of God, our Judge, is sharp and severe; he sees the hidden vices of the mind, through all the fairest veils of nature, and the brightest dress of outward virtue. We may cheat others with the disguises of religion, and allure the love of the best of christians: we may cheat ourselves by these fair appearances, and entertain a fond opinion of our own saintship; but the great God can never be imposed upon at this rate. He knows well what is lovely and excellent in his creatures; but when he seats himself upon his throne of judgment, all their shining ornaments of body and mind are blemished, are darkened, are lost in his eyes, if he discovers a secret love to sin in the heart. Where the love of this world prevails, it over-balances all other good qualities, though ever so valuable in themselves, and though they may create love in every beholder, yet the love of God is not to be purchased, nor persuaded, contrary to his own settled and eternal rules of judgment. *If any man love this world, the love of the Father is not in him;* 1 John ii. 15. nor does the Father love him. The prince of devils has many noble endowments, and intellectual glories; the natural powers of an angel remained still with him; but his inward enmity to God, confines him for ever to hell: and in the sense of the apostle James, *Whosoever will be a friend to the world, is the enemy of God;* James iv. 4. though in many other excellencies he might be a fellow for angels.

Wise and happy is that soul who fears to build his hopes of heaven upon the sand, upon a shining but feeble foundation. Wise and happy is he who does not mistake the glories of nature for divine grace; who does not satisfy himself to seek a little after heaven, but resolves to find it, and parts with all for the knowledge and the love of Christ. While others, who pretend to much wisdom, raise their vain expectations of happiness, upon a few natural accomplishments, and devout wishes, this man pursues the work upon diviner principles, and brings it to perfection: and when others, at the great day of decision, meet with shame and terrible disappointment, he shall be applauded, in the face of angels, as the only wise man, and shall find himself for ever happy.

The 5th, and last remark, is this; how dangerous a snare is great riches! They become a sore temptation (even to persons well-inclined) to tie their souls fast to this world, and persuade them to neglect God, and Christ, and heaven. This was the case of the young man in my text; *he went away* from our Lord melancholy and grieved, that he could not join Christ and the world together: he *had great possessions*, and therefore he refused to be a follower of Christ, under the poor and mean circumstances of his appearance among men; see verses 22, 23. And our Lord himself makes this same remark, *How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God?* that is, as he explains it in the following verse, because it is so hard, for those who possess great riches, not to love them too well, and to trust in them as their chief good.

How many lovely qualities are here spoiled at once, by the love of this world! and a man that was not far from the kingdom of God, divided from Christ, and driven to a fatal distance from heaven, by this dangerous interposing snare! A wretched chain, though it was a golden one, that withheld his soul from the embraces of his Saviour. He was young, he was modest and humble, he had a desire to be saved, and he went far in the outward forms of godliness; *all these commands*, said he, *have I kept from my youth*, or childhood; and he had a mind to follow Christ too: But Jesus was poor, and his followers must take up their cross, and share in his poverty. This was the parting point; this was the bar to his salvation; he was *almost a christian*, but his riches prevented him from being *altogether so*. O fatal wealth, and foolish possessor!

It became our blessed Lord, the heir of all things to divest himself of wealth and grandeur, and to renounce all the pomp and glittering equipage of this world, when he came to introduce a religion so spiritual and so refined, as the gospel was: and it became him to put such a test as this to such as pretended to be

his disciples; whether they durst venture to exchange the present world, and the visible enjoyments of it, for glories future and invisible? It was proper he should try whether they could deny themselves, and become poor for his sake, who made himself poor for their sakes, and promised them unknown treasures in heaven. Bet the test proved too severe, and the gate too strait for this young man, with all the bulk of his estate to enter in at it.

Well might the apostle teach Timothy, the young preacher, to *charge them that are rich in this world, not to trust in uncertain riches, but to do good* to the poor, to *distribute*, to the needy, that they *might lay up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come*; 1 Tim. vi. 17, &c. because men are so ready to think that a store of gold is a good foundation to trust in for happiness here, and forget hereafter. Well might he admonish them *to lay hold on eternal life*, because they are so ready to hold their money fast, though they let eternal life go. They that have much, are often greedy of more, and thereby *fall into temptations and snares, into many foolish and hurtful lusts, that drown men in perdition: for the love of money is the root of all evil; which, while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith*, have forsaken Christ, *and pierced themselves through with many sorrows; ver.* 9, 10.

Shall I take occasion here to put the rich in mind of their danger, and intreat them to watch against the shining allurement that besets them around? Have a care lest your eyes be dazzled with this glittering world, and blinded to the gospel of Christ: and shall I comfort the poor, by telling them their privilege, how much more free they are from this golden snare? You have been used to meanness and poverty, therefore we may hope that the plainness and simplicity of the gospel will not offend you: that the doctrine of the cross, and the poverty of the Man of Nazareth, who hung upon it for your sakes, will not be a scandal to your thoughts, nor a bar to your faith. In the days of Christ, the *poor received the gospel; and not many rich, and not many mighty*, have in any age been the followeres of a despised Jesus.

O may the rich in this assembly be led by divine grace to break through all their temptations, and attend their Saviour, though his name, and his disciples here on earth be surrounded with all the forms of contempt and poverty! And may the meaner hearers improve their advantage, and take up their cross, and follow their Lord, till they are all joined to the glorious assembly above, and made possessors of everlasting riches! *Amen.*

HYMN FOR SERMON VII.

A Hopeful Youth falling short of Heaven.

MUST all the charms of nature then,
So hopeless to salvation prove?
Can hell demand, can heaven condemn
The man whom Jesus deigns to love?

The man, who sought the ways of truth,
Paid friends and neighbours all their due
A modest, sober, lovely youth,
And thought he wanted nothing now?

But mark the change: thus spake the Lord
Come part with earth for heaven to-day:
The youth astonished at the word,
In silent sadness went his way.

Poor virtues, that be boasted so,
This test unable to endure,
Let Christ, and grace, and glory go,
To make his land and money sure!

Ah foolish choice of treasures here!
Ah fatal love of tempting gold!
Must this base world be bought so dear!
And life and heaven so cheaply sold?

In vain the charms of nature shine,
If this vile passion governs me:
Transform my soul, O love divine!
And make me part with all for thee.

SERMON VIII.

A Hopeful Youth falling Short of Heaven.

MARK X. 21.—Then Jesus beholding him, loved him.

THE SECOND PART.

WHEN our Saviour dwelt upon earth, he found a young man in the coasts of Judea, that preferred the riches of this world to all the treasures of heaven; and yet Jesus cast an eye of love upon him.

In the foregoing discourse upon these words, it has been considered what sort of love Christ could shew to a man, whose soul was so vain and carnal; and what good qualities appeared in this youth, that could engage the love of our Saviour, notwithstanding the guilt of his covetousness; and some remarks were made upon a man so lovely, and so beloved of Christ.

First, The love which our Saviour manifested to this person, was not properly a divine love, for that would have changed his nature, and refined his carnal desires, and conferred grace and salvation upon him: We must understand it therefore only in this sense, that the affections of his human nature were drawn out towards something that was valuable and excellent in this young Israelite: He approved of those accomplishments which he beheld in him, and felt a sort of complacency in his person and character. He had an innocent and human desire of his welfare, he gave him divine instructions for this end, and pitied him heartily that he was so far gone in the love of the world, as to neglect the offer of heaven.

Secondly, The qualities which might attract our Saviour's love, were such as these: He was young and sprightly, and it was probable that he had something very agreeable in his aspect: His carriage was courteous and obliging for he kneeled before our Lord, and saluted him with much civility: He had a religious education, much outward sobriety and virtue, so that he was ready to think himself a complete saint. *All these commands*, says he, *have I kept from my youth*; yet he was willing to receive further instructions, if any thing else were necessary, in order to eternal life. Add to all this, that he was rich and powerful, he was a ruler among the Jews, and had large possessions, which made his humility and other virtues appear the more amiable

because they so seldom are found in persons of an exalted station.

Thirdly, The remarks that were made upon a person that had so many good qualities, and yet missed of heaven, might instruct us not to disclaim any thing that is worthy and excellent, though it is mingled with much iniquity; but to pay respect and love, as our Lord Jesus did, to persons that have any thing valuable in them, though their virtues are imperfect, and fall short of saving grace. We may learn also, that God chuses not as man would chuse, nor saves all those that a wise and good man may well bestow his love upon. We are taught further, that many lovely accomplishments, joined together, are not sufficient to attain eternal life, unless we renounce this world, and follow Christ: and we are divinely warned of the danger of riches, how great a snare they sometimes prove to persons of a hopeful character.

Fourthly, We proceed now to the last thing proposed, and that is, to make an address to three sorts of persons, taking the occasion from the character in my text.

I. Those who have any thing lovely or excellent in them, but through the power of a carnal mind, are kept at a distance from God, and have no title to heaven; such are beloved of men, but not beloved of God.—II. Those who are weaned in some good measure from this world, and have treasures in heaven, but are defective in those qualities that might render them amiable on earth; such are beloved of God, but not of men.—III. Those that are furnished with every good quality, and every grace, that are the objects of the special love of God, and almost every man loves them too.

I. Let me address myself to those who have any thing lovely or excellent in them, but, through the power of a carnal mind, are kept at a distance from God, and have no title to heaven. Such was the young man in the gospel; and according to the several good qualities that he possessed, I shall divide my exhortation to several persons.

1. To such as are endowed with any natural excellencies of body or mind. Youth and beauty, strength and health, wit and reason, judgment, memory, or sweet disposition; all these are the gifts of God in the world of nature, and render persons so far amiable as they are possessed of them. You that flourish in the vigour and glory of youth, and yet have no saving acquaintance with God in Christ, no right to eternal life; while I behold you, I mourn over you with much compassion. What pity it is that the flower of your age should be employed only to sooth your vanity! to adorn your guilty passions, and to dress up the scenes of sin! That flower will wither in old age, and it leaves no per-

fume behind, but what arises from virtue and goodness: or, perhaps, you will give it up to untimely decay: by indulgence of irregular pleasures, you devote it to be blasted by the breath of Satan, and in the smoke of hell. But is it not a pity, that a strong and healthy constitution should be wasted in slavery to your appetites, and in making provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts of it? Why should not the powers of nature, in their first bloom and glory, adorn the kingdom of grace? Why should not our sprightly days, and the warmest hours of life, be employed in some useful activity for the interest of God! What a decency and honour is added to religion, by its fairest and youngest votaries! With what peculiar praises does the word of God recommend the character of youthful piety? How is the young king Josiah celebrated in the sacred records? that *while he was yet young he began to seek after the God of David his Father, &c.* 2 Chron. xxiv. 3. How is Timothy commended, *who had known the holy scriptures from his very childhood:* 2 Tim. iii. 15. And there are some young in years, to whom the apostle John might address himself with the same pleasure as he does to the christian converts, whom he calls young men, strong in grace, who had the love of God abiding in them, and had overcome the wicked one; 1 *John* ii. 14. And he gives them in the next verse a most needful and friendly caution against the *love of the world, and the things of it*, lest they shut the love of the Father out of their hearts. What an abuse and waste of life are ye guilty of, when ye lay out the brightest moments of it upon the works of darkness? and treasure up to yourselves everlasting darkness and fire!

I pity the young, the vigorous, the comely figures of human nature, that neglect to seek after divine grace, that are ruined and made wretched to all eternity, by their excessive love of the pleasures, or the pomp, or the riches of this vain world. A thousand such sinners that were once the hope of their families, and the lovely ornaments of the place they lived in, are now cursing the day of their birth, and raging with despair in the midst of the wrath of God.

Let me speak a word to those also that have rich endowments of mind. Where we behold a sprightly genius, solid reason, and deep judgment, we cannot forbear loving the possessors of them: We cannot forbear to say, "It is a pity that so much wit should be abused to ridicule religion, and do honour to foul iniquity; that it should be enslaved to all the arts of lewdness, and dress up the shame of nature in the charms of language." Or if it be not debased to so exceeding vile purposes, yet at best, it is a pity it should be all employed in jesting and trifling, in mirth and raillery, and vain amusement. Might it not

have been laid out infinitely better, to allure sinners to the love of God, to adorn the truths of our holy profession, and give credit to the gospel of Christ, even in the eyes of the witty and profane?

I pity the man of lively imagination without sanctifying grace. What a lovely wilderness of blooming weeds! fair indeed in various colours, but useless and unsavoury, and it must be burnt up with unquenchable fire. You are the persons whose happy talents give a relish to the common comforts of life; you diffuse joy and pleasure through all the company, and enliven the dullest hours; your presence is coveted by all men, and you are beloved of all: But how dismal is your state, if you neglect holiness and are not beloved of God! Can you imagine that your gay fancy will brighten the gloom of hell? or give airs to yourselves or your companions, in those hideous regions of sorrow? It is a most melancholy reflection to consider, that persons of your accomplishments should increase the number of the damned; and there is no sport or amusement admitted there, to divert the anguish of the tortured mind, or to relieve that heavy and everlasting heart-ache.

I pity the man of strong reason and great sagacity of judgment, that hath traced nature in her most secret recesses; that has sounded the depths of the sea, and measured the heavens; bul has spent no time in searching the deep things of God, and lets the mysteries of religion lie unregarded as obscure and useless things. He has never sounded the depth of his own misery and guilt, as he is a son of Adam: Nor is he acquainted with the way of climbing to heaven by the cross of the Son of God. Reason is a faculty of supreme excellence among the gifts of nature, and it is dreadful to think that it should ever be engaged in opposition to divine grace. How great and wretched are the men of reason, who strain the nerves of their soul to overturn the doctrine of Christ! who labour with all their intellectual powers to shake the foundations of the gospel, to diminish the authority of the scriptures, and to unsettle the hope of feeble christians!

There are others who employ the best powers of the soul in pursuing the interests of this life; they are wise in contriving to gratify their appetites, to fill their coffers, and to heap up to themselves wealth and honours; and wise to secure all these to their posterity after death: *They call their lands by their own names*, and perpetuate their memory to the latest generation, but make no provision for their own souls: they are wise to set in order their houses in the day of their health, and all things prepared for their dying hour, besides the concerns of their own eternity; these are delayed from day to day, and left at the utmost hazard;

and still they think the next month, or the next year, it is time enough to prepare for heaven, when perhaps a summons is sent suddenly from on high; *Thou fool this night is thy soul required of thee;* Luke xii. 20. What confusion and fear, what hurry and distress of spirit will seize you in that hour? You that have laid out all your wisdom upon the little businesses of this life, and trifled with affairs of everlasting importance; you must go down to the chambers of death in surprize and anguish; you must leave all the fruits of your wisdom behind you, and be branded for eternal fools.

I pity those who are blest with a large memory, and would plead with you this day for the sake of your souls. The memory, it is a noble repository of the mind, it is made to receive divine truths, to be stored with the ideas of God and his grace, with the glories of Christ and heaven; it is given us to furnish and supply the heart and tongue upon all occasions, for worship, for conference, and for holy joy. What pity it is so wondrous a capacity should be crowded with vile images, with wanton scenes, with profane jests, and idle stories! Or, at best, it is filled with gold and silver, and merchandize; with lands and houses, ships and insurances; it is all inscribed with stocks, annuities, and purchases, and turned into a mere book of accounts, a trading shop, or an everlasting exchange: Night and day, the buyers and sellers are passing through this temple, which should be consecrated to God; and there is no room left for the thoughts of heaven there. Shall these busy swarms of cares and vanities for ever fill up so large a chamber of the soul? Shall impertinencies be for ever thrust into this treasury? such as will stand you in no stead, when you are dismissed from the body, but shall vanish all at once in that hour, and shall leave your spirits poor and naked; or if they follow you to the world of spirits, it will be but as so much fuel gathered for your future burning.

Think a little with yourselves, ye possessors of these rich endowments of the mind when you have been honoured here on earth, can you bear to be doomed to eternal shame and punishment in hell? Shall this wit and this reason be there employed to express your hatred against God, and to forge perpetual blasphemies against the Majesty of heaven? are you willing to be joined to the society of devils, and be engaged in their abominable work? Shall this sprightly fancy, this subtle reason, this large memory, serve for no purpose, but to aggravate your guilt, and your damnation? Shall these fine talents sharpen your misery, and give edge to the keenest reflections of conscience: conscience, that inward sting of the mind; conscience, that immortal tormentor? Yet this must be the certain portion of those

who spend their life, and lie down in death, with these talents unsanctified: for the anguish and torture of sinful souls, must rise, and grow for ever, in proportion to the glory of their abused endowments.

Though, perhaps I have been tedious already under this head, yet before I part with it, I must address myself to those who are born with a sweet disposition, that seem to be cast in a softer mould than the rest of men. I love and pity those of my acquaintance who are blessed with so divine a temper; who have tenderness and good-will in their very form and aspect, and I mourn to think that any of these should perish for ever. You are the favourites of all men, and beloved by all who enjoy the pleasure of your acquaintance; do ye not long to be the favourites of God too! You seem to be made for the delight and comfort of mankind: but shall this be all your portion? Good-humour is the composition of your nature, *and the law of kindness is on your lips! when the ear hears* you, *then it blesses you; and when the eye sees* you, *it gives witness to you.* But is this enough to depend upon for eternal life? Perhaps you have borrowed part of the valuable qualities of that good man Job, *you have delivered the poor that cry, and the fatherless that had none to help him;* you *have caused the widow's heart to sing for joy, and the blessing of him that was ready to perish, has come often upon you;* Job xxix. 11, 12, 13. There is so much natural goodness in your constitution, that leads you on, by a sweet instinct, to the practice of many charities: but this is not saving grace. If Jesus Christ himself were upon earth in this humbled state, he would look upon you as man, and love you; but the Holy God looks down from heaven, and beholds you as the object of his just and divine hatred, while you live in a state of vanity and sin, drunken with sensual pleasures, and at enmity with God.

This sweetness of temper, that springs from your blood, and the happy mixture of humours; or, at best, from the mere natural frame of your spirits, will never pass, upon the great tribunal, for holiness and inward religion. With all this charming appearance of virtues, these colours that look like heaven, you will be doomed to hell and perpetual misery, unless there be found in you some nobler qualities, such as love to God, mortification to this world, the knowledge and faith of Jesus Christ. If these be not the springs of your charity and love to men, you will not be secured from the condemning sentence of the Judge, nor from the company of devils in the future world.

But, oh! how will your soft and gentle natures bear the insult and rage of those malicious spirits? How will your temper, that had something so lovely in it, sustain to be banished for ever from the world of love? to be for ever excluded from all the

regions of peace and concord? How will your souls endure the madness and contention, the envy and spite of wicked angels? You that delighted on earth in the works of peace, what will ye do when your tender dispositions shall be hourly ruffled by the uproar and confusion of those dark regions? and instead of the society of God and blessed spirits, ye shall be eternally vexed with the perverse tempers of your fellow sinners, the sons of darkness? O that I could speak in melting language, or in the language of effectual terror, that I might by any means awaken your souls to jealousy and timely fear! That so many natural excellencies, as God has distributed amongst you, might not be wasted in sin, abused to dishonour, and aggravate your everlasting misery.

[This sermon may be divided here.]

2. My next exhortation shall be addressed to those youths who have been trained up in all the arts of civility, and have acquired a courteous and becoming carriage. There is something lovely in such an appearance, and it commands the love even of the rude and uncivil. It so nearly the resembles the sweetness of natural temper, and imitates good humour so much to the life, that it often passes upon company instead of nature, and attains many valuable ends in human society. But where both these are happily joined, how shining is that character, and universally beloved? We are pleased and charmed with your conversation, whose manners are polished, and whose language is refined from the rude and vulgar ways of speech. You know how to speak civil things, without flattery, upon all occasions; to instruct, without assuming a superior air, and to reprove without a frown, or forbidding countenance. You have learned when to speak and when to be silent, and to perform every act of life with its proper graces; and can ye be content with all this good breeding to be thrust down to hell? Is it not pity that you should be taught to pay all your honours to men, and practise none to the living God? Have you not read those duties in connexion; 1 *Pet.* ii. 17. *Honour all men, love the brotherhood, fear God, and honour the king.* And why will you divide what God has joined, and give every one their due, besides God your Maker? how dare you treat the creatures with decency and ceremony, and treat God the Creator with neglect; salute all men with their proper titles of distinction, and not learn how to address God in prayer? pay due visits to all your acquaintance, and yet scarce ever make a visit to the mercy-seat, or bow your knees before the Majesty of Heaven.

I pity those who have all the arts of complaisance in perfection, and practise civility in every form; but are very little acquainted

with the forms of godliness, and never yet felt any thing of the life of religion, or the powers of the world to come. How mournful a sight is it to behold a well-accomplished gentleman, yet a vile sinner! A pretty obliging youth among men, but deaf and obstinate to all the calls of God, and the intreaties of a dying Saviour! A person of a free and ingenuous deportment, yet in chains of slavery to corruption and death! and how unspeakably sorrowful will it be at the last day, to see such as these, the gay, the affable, the fair-spoken, and the well-bred sinner, in the utmost agonies of horror and despair, mourning a lost God, a lost soul, and a lost heaven!

Let me speak once more and try to provoke you to jealousy. Shall the rugged and clownish part of mankind press forward into that kingdom which ye despise? Will ye be patient to see some of the unbred and unpolished set at the right hand of the Judge, and yourselves with shame, be divided to the left? How will ye endure to see the honours of heaven put upon those whom you have so often despised in your hearts upon earth? Can you imagine that that tribunal will be bribed with fair speeches? or that any thing will be accepted in that court, besides solid and hearty religion? Suffer this exhortation then, and then receive this advice, you that are not used to deny any thing to your friends, you that love to oblige those who ask any reasonable favour at your hands; nor let me plead this day in vain.

3. To those that have enjoyed the blessing of religious parents, and a pious education; that have been bred up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, in the knowledge and practice of the moral law, and in the outward performance of religion, according to the appointments of the gospel. Children, we love you for your fathers' sakes: we love to look upon you, for you are the little living images of our dearest friends: we have loved to ask you the younger questions that your parents have taught you, and to see the first-fruits of their instruction and holy care; but we pity you, from our very souls, when we behold you break the bars of your education, and making haste to ruin: or when, at best, ye go on and tread the circle of outward duties; as ye are led by custom and form, with a neglect of inward christianity, and hearty godliness.

Did yur parents love God above all earthly things, and will ye prefer the love of this world above all things heavenly and divine? Have ye had such shining examples of holiness brought so near you to no purpose? Do they pray for you daily? Do they daily mourn over you, and hope, and wish, and exhort you to take care of your souls? And are you resolved that their counsels, their prayers, and their tears, shall be laid out upon you in vain? Is this the return you make for all their care and

ompassion? They tell you daily that they can have *no greater y than to see their children walking in the truth*, and will you cru- ly disappoint their pleasures, and bring down their grey hairs ith sorrow to the grave? Perhaps there are some of you, who ready have parted with your parents, and their spirits are at st; and has neither their life, nor their death, made serious d lasting impressions upon you; have they entreated you in eir last dying moments, by all that is dear and sacred, to make re of heaven? And will you abandon these entreaties, and ll your souls to the world, and to death, for a few perishing mptations? Have they laid a solemn charge upon you at eir last farewel, to travel in the paths of piety, and meet them mount Sion in the great day? and have you wandered already om this high road of holiness, and forgot the solemnity and e charge? Shall your parents dwell for ever with their God, d shall their children for ever dwell in fire prepared for the evil and his angels?

You cannot sin at so easy and so cheap a rate as others. You ust break through stronger bonds, and do bolder violence to our consciences, before you can indulge iniquity, and pursue ickedness. Your temptations to sin have been less than hers, and your advantages for salvation have been much greater. ur hearts bleed within us, to think of your double guilt, and our aggravated damnation: to think that you should not only e separated from your parents, and their God, for ever, but at your place of torment shall be the hottest also, amongst all our companions in misery.

What anguish and inward vexation will seize you, when ye all reflect how nigh ye were raised in outward privileges, and ow near ye were brought to heaven? and how you quitted your terest, and your hopes there, for the trifles of this life, for a se lust, or a foolish vanity: What will ye say, when ye shall e *many coming from the east, and from the west*, from families wickedness, from the ends of the earth, and from the borders hell, and sit down with your fathers in the kingdom of heaven; hile you *the children of the kingdom, are cast out into outer rkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth;* Mat. ii. 11, 12. I presume thus far with freedom to address you, *if any methods I might provoke to emulation them which are of the sh of Israel, of the kindred of the saints, and might save some them;* Rom. xi. 14.

4. To those who have taken some pains in seeking after eter- l life, and are still enquiring the way thither. Have a care of sting in the mere practice of moral duties, or in the outward ofession of christianity: never content yourselves with the

righteousness of the Pharisee. Were your virtues more glorious than they are, and your righteousnesses more perfect, they could never answer for your former guilt, before the throne of a just and holy God. It is only the atonement of Christ, and his all-sufficient sacrifice, which can stand you in stead there; and it is pity that a youth, of so much virtue, should fall short of heaven, and be but almost a christian. It is pity that you should have gained so large a share of knowledge, and so honourable a character of sobriety, and, after all, want *the one thing needful*, an universal change, and renovation of your hearts, by receiving the gospel. Have you proceeded thus far, and will you not go on to perfection? *Take heed that ye lose not the things that ye have wrought, but that ye receive a full reward*; 2 John 8.

It is pity you should enquire the way to heaven, and not walk in it, when it is marked out before your feet with so much plainness: It is pity you should indulge the love of this world so far, as to suffer it to forbid you the pursuit of a better; or at best, when ye receive instructions about your souls, you let the affairs of this life overwhelm and bury that good seed, and it never grows up to practice. What would you say to the folly of a man, who has a long and hazardous journey to make, to take possession of a large estate, and once a week he comes to enquire the way, and hears a fair description of all the road, perhaps he mourns his long neglect, and resolves upon the journey; but the next six days are filled up with a thousand impertinences; and when the seventh returns, he has not taken one step forward in the way?

Believe me, sirs, it is not an easy thing to be saved: laziness, and mere enquiries, will never effect your happiness, nor secure your souls from perdition; and all the pains you have already taken will be lost, if you give over the pursuit. Let me call some of you this day to remember your former labours, the prayers and tears that you have poured out in secret before God; remember your days of darkness, and your nights of terror, the groans of conscience, and the inward agonies you felt, when you were first awakened to behold your guilt and danger; remember these hours, and these sorrows; and love and pity your own souls so far, as to pursue the work, and let not your pains be lost: *Have ye suffered so many things in vain, if it be yet in vain;* Gal. iii. 4. Ye have wrestled with some sins, and have in part got the mastery over them; and shall a darling lust overcome you at last, and slay your souls with eternal death? Ye have resisted the tempter in some of his assaults and put the powers of hell to flight; will you give up yourselves at last to be led in triumph by Satan, and become his everlasting slave? Methinks you look so amiable in

those victories ye have already obtained, that I would fain have you press onward through the field of battle, fulfil the warfare, and receive the crown.

The ministers of the gospel look upon you with concern and pity: We love you because you have proceeded thus far in religion; but ye shall not be the beloved of God, if ye stop here, or go back again to sin and folly. We had a hopeful prospect of you once, and said to our Lord in prayer, "Surely these shall be one day the inhabitants, and the supports of thine house; these young plants shall one day be fruitful trees in thy vineyard; they shall be pillars in thy holy temple." But alas! there is a death upon our hopes, there is a darkness and a lethargy upon your souls: We look upon you in all these your endowments, we mourn over you with compassion, and with zeal we express our grief and our love: "Awake, ye young sinners, who have deserved our love; awake, that ye sleep not to everlasting death."

5. To those that are rich in this world, and are furnished with the former good qualities too. I am well assured, while I address myself to this assembly, I speak to many persons of this character*. Ye are wealthy and condescending, like the young man in my text: ye are often uncovered, and ye pay reverence to the ministers of the gospel, as he did; ye give us honours and civilities beyond our merit or wish; ye come and ask of us the same question, "What shall we do to inherit eternal life?" And we tell you from the word of God, "Love not the world, nor the "things of the world; for where the love of the world is, the "love of the Father is not. If riches increase, set not your heart "upon them. Mortify your affections that are upon the earth, "and deny yourselves, take up your cross, and follow Christ:" Become his disciples, without reserve, in faith, and love, and universal holiness. While we propose these paths to eternal happiness, shall it be said concerning you, they went away sorrowful, having great possessions?

Your condescending and affable deportment, looks brighter by all the rich lustre of your habits; and the bigger your circumstances are, the more lovely is your humble attention to the ministers of Christ, and your readiness to hear our words is the more commendable: But will ye be hearers only, and never practice? The time is coming, and the hour makes haste upon you, when ye shall stand upon the borders of the grave, and look into that world of spirits, where all the honours and distinctions of this world are known no more. Ye shall be stripped of those vanities which ye loved above God and heaven. Think how mean and

* This discourse was delivered at Tunbridge-wells.

despicable a figure your souls will make amongst fallen angels, if the love of this world, and neglect of God should bring you into that dreadful company. What gay and swelling figures soever you have made on earth, you will make but a poor and wretched one in that world, if ye are found destitute of the riches of grace; and it will be a mournful inscription written on your tomb, "*This rich man died,——and he lift up his eyes in hell;*" Luke xvi. 23. *But, beloved, we hope better things of you, though we thus speak, and things that accompany salvation*; Heb. vi. 9. Thus I have finished the first general exhortation, to those who have any valuable qualities attending them, but through the love of this world are tempted to neglect heaven.

The second exhortation is addressed to those who are weaned, in some good degree, from this world, and have treasures in heaven, but are defective in those good qualities which might render them amiable upon earth. I confess I have no direct commission from my text to address you here: But I am unwilling and ashamed that a rich young man should go to hell with some more lovely appearances upon him than you have, who are in the way to heaven.

You have chosen God for your eternal portion, and your highest hope; you have chosen his Son Jesus for your only Mediator, and your way to the Father: you have chosen the worship and the ordinances of God as your dearest delight; ye are the chosen objects of the love of God, and his grace has inclined you to love him above all things. Methinks I would not have any blot cast upon so many excellencies. Be ye advised therefore to seek after that agreeable temper and conduct which may make you beloved of men too; that the wisest and best of men may chuse you for an honour to their acquaintance and company. This will render your profession more honourable, and make religion itself look more lovely in the sight of the world.

What a foul blemish it is to our christianity, when we shall hear it said, "Here is a man who professes the gospel of grace, but he does not practise the decencies that the light of nature would teach him! He tells us, that he belongs to heaven; but he has so little of humanity in his deportment, that he is hardly fit company for any upon earth." Shall it be said of any of you, "Here is a man that pretends to the love of God, but he is morose in his disposition, rude in his behaviour, and makes a very unlovely figure amongst men? Let him fill what station he will in the church, he bears but a disagreeable character in the house, and disgraces the family or the city where he dwells. What his secret virtues or graces are, we know not, for they shine all inward; he keeps all his goodness to himself, and never suffers his light to shine out amongst his neighbours."

Can I bear that it should be said concerning me, "He seems indeed to have something of the love of God in him, but he is so rough in his natural temper, and so uncorrected in his manners, that scarce any man loves him? He may bend his knees to God in prayer, but he has not common civility towards men. His morality and honesty appear not upon him with honour: His virtue does not seem to sit well about him, and his religion is dressed in a very unpleasing form." Is this the way to give reputation to the gospel? Is this to *adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things*; Tit. ii. 10. When we become christians, we *put away bitterness, and wrath, and clamour, and evil-speaking, and filthiness, and scurrilous jests*; Eph. iv. 31. and v. 4. We are commanded to *speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers*; but to be *gentle, and shew meekness to all*; Tit. iii. 2. *to prefer one another in honour; to bless, and curse not; to rejoice with them that rejoice, and to weep with them that weep; to condescend to men of low estate; and, if possible, to live peaceably with all men*; Rom. xii. 14, 15, 16—18.

Are there any souls here of this unpleasing character and carriage! Did you ever read these words in your bibles? Do ye think these are the commands of Christ, or no? You profess to love him above all, but what care have you taken to obey these precepts of his? or do you think the sublime practices of faith and adoration will make those lower duties needless? Have ye found the sweetness of being at peace with God, and tasted of the pleasures of his love; and can ye disregard all the practices and pleasures of love and peace among men?

We are not required indeed to sell truth for peace, nor strict godliness for the forms of civility. There is no need that we should conform ourselves to any of the sinful practices of this world, in order to fulfil the law of love. But wheresoever the customs of the place where we dwell are consistent with the strict and holy rules of Christ, we should practise them so far, as to render ourselves agreeable to those with whom we converse, that we may shine in the world as the honours of Christ, and that unbelievers may be won by our conversation, to come and hear our gospel, to learn the same faith, and embrace the same hope: Not only the things that are true, and honest, and just, and pure, but the things that are lovely in the sight of men, and things that are of good report, must be the subjects of our meditation, our learning, and practice; Phil. iv. 8. St. Paul, that great apostle, did not think these things unworthy of his care; he enjoins them upon the primitive christians from his own example, and promises them the presence of the God of peace. These are the things which I have taught you, saith he, these ye have heard and seen in me; conform your manners to these rules, and the God peace shall be with you; ver. 9.

[illegible] habit of christianity is all [illegible] the religion of our Saviour into [illegible] itself, if our temper be sour [illegible] and rude, and our speech [illegible]. A Jew might make a bet- [illegible] severe deportment, than a chris- [illegible] put on a morose air with better [illegible] the dispensation he was under, the [illegible] the terrors of mount Sinai. But [illegible] are free-born; Gal. iv. 26—31. and [illegible] ingenuous in all respects. John the bap- [illegible] hair, may be indulged in a roughness of [illegible] a forerunner of the gospel, and can hardly [illegible] but the followers of the Lamb should have [illegible] manner, that every one who beholds us [illegible] that the Son of God, if he were here upon [illegible] upon us and love us in both his natures, with a [illegible] love.

[illegible]. The last address I would make to those who are [illegible] every good quality, and every divine grace, who [illegible] to God and men. Such a one was our Lord Jesus [illegible] the days of his flesh: He, from his very childhood, [illegible] wisdom, and in stature, and in favour with God and [illegible] 52. He had further discoveries of divine love [illegible] daily: and as his acquaintance increased in his [illegible] so did his friends too, till his divine commission [illegible] necessary for him to oppose the corruptions of his country, [illegible] a wicked age, and thus expose himself to the anger [illegible] that would not be reformed. There was something [illegible] in his human nature, beyond the common appearance of [illegible], for his body was a temple, in which the godhead [illegible] in a peculiar and transcendant manner, and his soul was [illegible] united to divinity. I cannot but think, that, in a literal [illegible], he was *fairer than the children of men*, and that there was [illegible], and a natural sweetness in his language: Psal. [illegible] If the Jews beheld *no comeliness in him, if his visage was* [illegible] *than the sons of men*, it was because he *was a man of* [illegible], *and acquainted with grief*; which might cast [illegible] of heaviness or gloom upon his countenance, or [illegible] on the features of youth too soon. But surely our [illegible], in the whole composition of his nature, in the mildness [illegible] his deportment, and in all the graces of conversation, was *the* [illegible] *of ten thousands, and altogether lovely*. How amiable are [illegible] who are made like him?

[illegible] such was John the beloved disciple; you may read the [illegible] of his soul in his epistles: What a spirit of love breathes

in every line? What compassion and tenderness to the babes in Christ? What condescending affection to the young men, and hearty good-will to the fathers, who were then his equals in age? With what obliging language does he treat the beloved Gaius, in his third letter; and with how much civility, and hearty kindness, does he address the elect lady and her children, in the second? In his younger years, indeed, he seems to have something more of fire and vehemence, for which he was surnamed *Boanerges*, or *sons of thunder*; Mark iii. 17. But our Lord saw so much good temper in him, mixed with that sprightliness and zeal, that he expressed much pleasure in his company, and favoured him with peculiar honours and endearments above the rest. This is the disciple who was taken into the holy mount with James and Peter, and saw our Lord glorified before the time; this is the disciple who leaned on his bosom at the holy supper, and was indulged the utmost freedom of conversation with his Lord; John xiii. 23, 24, 25. This is the man who obtained this glorious title, *The disciple whom Jesus loved*; that is, with a distinguishing and particular love. As God, and as a Saviour, he loved them all like saints; but as man, he loved St. John like a friend; John xxi. 20. and when hanging upon the cross and just expiring, he committed his mother to his care; a most precious and convincing pledge of special friendship.

O how happy are the persons who most nearly resemble this apostle, who are thus privileged, thus divinely blessed! How infinitely are ye indebted to God your Benefactor, and your Father, who has endowed you with so many valuable accomplishments on earth, and assures you of the happiness of heaven? It is he who has made you fair, or wise; it is he who has given you ingenuity, or riches, or, perhaps, has favoured you with all these; and yet has weaned your hearts from the love of this world, and led you to the pursuit of eternal life: It is he that has cast you in so refined a mould, and given you so sweet a disposition, that has inclined you to sobriety and every virtue, has raised you to honour and esteem, has made you possessors of all that is desirable in this life, and appointed you a nobler inheritance in that which is to come. What thankfulness does every power of your natures owe to your God? that heaven looks down upon you, and loves you, and the world around you fix their eyes upon you, and love you: That God has formed you in so bright a resemblance of his own Son, his first-beloved, and has ordained you joint-heirs of heaven with him; Rom. viii. 17.

Watch hourly against the temptations of pride; remember the fallen angels, and their once exalted station; and have a care lest ye also *be puffed up, and fall into the condemnation of the devil.* Walk before God with exactest care, and in deepest hu-

mility. Let that divine veil be spread over all your honours, that as you are the fairest images of Christ, ye may be dressed like him too; for he who is the highest Son of God, is also the holiest of the sons of men; he who is personally united to the godhead, and is one with his Creator, is the humblest of every creature.

HYMN FOR SERMON VIII.

A Hopeful Youth falling Short of Heaven.

THUS far 'tis well: You read, you pray,
You hear God's holy word,
You hearken what your parents say,
And learn to serve the Lord.

Your friends are pleas'd to see your ways,
Your practice they approve:
Jesus himself would give you praise,
And look with eyes of love.

But if you quit the paths of truth,
To follow foolish fires,
And give a loose to giddy youth,
With all its wild desires.

If you will let your Saviour go,
To hold your riches fast;
Or hunt for empty joys below,
You'll lose your heaven at last.

The rich young man whom Jesus lov'd
Should warn you to forbear!
His love of earthly treasures prov'd
A fatal golden snare.

See, gracious God, dear Saviour, see
How youth is prone to fall:
Teach them to part with all for thee,
And love thee more than all.

SERMON IX.

The Hidden Life of a Christian.

COL. iii. 3.—For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

THE FIRST PART.

DEATH and life are two words of a solemn and important sound. They carry so much of force and moment in them, as must awaken mankind to attention; and therefore the Spirit of God often uses them as metaphors, to express things unseen and spiritual, and to describe the state both of saints and sinners: So that all who are alive on the face of the earth, in the language of scripture, are said to be dead too, but in different senses. Those who are in a state of nature, and under the power of sin, unpardoned and unsanctified, are dead in trespasses and sins; yet they live the life of brutes in the lusts of the flesh, or the life of devils in the lusts of the mind; Eph. ii. 1, 2. Those who are recovered from the fall, and brought into a state of grace by the gospel of Christ, are said to be dead also; that is, they are dead to sin; Rom. vi. 11. and they are crucified, and so dead to the world; Gal. vi. 14. The delights of sin are hateful to them, so that they allure them not to forsake their God; and the lawful enjoyments of life are so far tasteless to the saints, in comparison of the things of heaven, that they have much less influence, than once they had, to tempt them away from God, and from the practice of holiness.

It is in this sense the christian Colossians are said to be dead in my text. But they have another, a new life, and that of a different kind; such as is mentioned in this verse, and which is hid with Christ in God: and it is this hidden life shall be the chief subject of my discourse.

These latter words of the text afford two plain and easy propositions or doctrines.

I. That the life of a christian is a hidden life.—II. That it is hid with Christ in God. Let us meditate on them in order.

Doctrine I. A christian's life is a hidden life.—Here we

shall, *First*, Consider what is this life, which is said to be hidden. And, *Secondly*, In what respects it is so.

First, What is this life of a christian which is said to be hidden?

Not the animal life, wherehy he eats, drinks, sleeps, moves and walks; this is visible enough to all about him. Not the civil life, as he stands in relation to other men in the world, whether as a son, as a father, a master, or a servant, a trader, a labourer, or an officer in the state: For all these are public, and seen of men.

But the hidden life is that whereby he is a christian indeed; his spiritual life, wherein he is devoted to God, and lives to the purposes of heaven and eternity. And this is the same life, which, in other parts of scripture, is called eternal; for the life of grace survives the grave, and is prolonged into glory. The same life of piety and inward pleasure, which begins on earth, is fulfilled in heaven; and it may be called the spiritual, or the eternal life, according to different respects; for it is the same continued life acting in different stations or places, and running through time and eternity; 1 John v. 11, 12. Eternal life is in the Son, and he that hath the Son, hath this life; it is begun in him, he is already possessed of it in some degree.

As the life of the child is the same with that of the full-grown man; as the same vital principles and powers run through the several successive stages of infancy, youth and manhood; so the divine life of a saint, begun on on earth, runs through this world, through death, and the separate state of souls; it appears in full-grown perfection, in the final heaven, when the whole saint shall stand complete in glory. Thus the spiritual life of a christian is eternal life begun; and eternal life is the spiritual life made perfect.

If we would describe this life in short, it may be represented thus: It is a life of faith, holiness and peace; a life of faith, or dependance upon God for all that we want; a life of holiness, rendering back again to God, in a way of honour and service, whatsoever we receive from him in a way of mercy; and a life of peace in the comfortable sense of the favour of God, and our acceptance with him through Jesus Christ. All these begin on earth, and in this sense faith itself, as well as peace and holiness, shall abide in heaven: we shall for ever be dependants, for ever happy and for ever holy.

In a state of nature the man lived such a sinful and carnal life, that was more properly called death; but when he becomes a believer, a true christian, he is new created; 2 Cor. v. 17. new-born; John iii. 3. raised from the dead, and quickened to

a new life; *Eph.* ii. 1, 5. which is called being risen with Christ, in the verses before my text; *Col.* iii. 1. And this very spiritual life, as the effect of our symbolical resurrection with Christ, is the subject of several verses of the 6th chapter to the Romans, whence I cannot but infer the same to be designed here, *viz.* that the christian who is dead to sin, is risen with Christ, and alive to God; as *Rom.* vi. 11. All the life that he lived before, with all the shew and bravery of it, with all the bustle and business, the entertainments and delights of it, was but a mere dream, a fancy, the picture of life, a shadow and emptiness, and but little above the brutes that perish. Now he lives a real, a substantial, a divine life, a-kin to God and angels, and quite of a different nature from what the men of this world live.

There is this difference indeed which the scripture makes between the spiritual life and the eternal. The first chiefly respects the operations of the soul, for the life of the body is not immortal here: the second includes soul and body too, for both shall possess immortality hereafter. The first is attended with many difficulties and sorrows; the second is all ease and pleasure. The first is represented as the labour and service: the last, as the great, though unmerited, reward; *Gal.* vi. 8. He that soweth to the Spirit, and fulfils the duties of the spiritual life, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. The one is the life of holiness and inward peace, though mingled with many defects, and surrounded with a thousand disadvantages and trials: the other, is the same life of holiness and peace, having surmounted every difficulty, shining and exulting in full joy and glory.

Secondly, We come to consider, in what respect this life may be called a hidden life.

And here I shall distinguish that part of it, which is more usually called the spiritual life, and is exercised in this world, from that which is more frequently called life eternal, and belongs rather to the world to come: and then I shall make distinct inferences from the consideration of each.

Now let us consider wherein the spiritual life is said to be hidden.

I. The acts and exercises of it are secret and unknown to the public world. The saint is much engaged in the important and hidden concerns of his divine life; and his converse is with God and Christ, who dwell in the world of invisibles.

Who knows the secret transactions between God and the soul of a christian, when he first entered into covenant with God, through Christ the Mediator, and began this happy life? Who can tell the inward workings of his spirit towards Jesus Christ his Lord in the first efforts of his faith, and embraces of our Saviour? Who was acquainted with the secret sorrows of his soul, when he was first set a mourning for his past sins, and humbled himself in

bitterness before God; Or who can express the surprizing delight, and secret satisfaction he felt at heart, when God communicated to him the first lively hope of forgiveness and divine salvation? O the unknown joys of such an hour which some christians have experienced, when a divine beam of light shone into their souls, and revealed Jesus Christ within them, as St. Paul speaks: when they saw his all-sufficiency of righteousness and grace, to answer their infinite necessities; and when they durst believe in him as their Saviour!

And as the beginnings of this life are hidden from the world, so the exercises and progress of it are a secret too. While the world is following after idols and vanity, the christian, in his retired chamber, breathes after his God and his Redeemer, and gives a loose to his warmest affections, in the pursuit of his Almighty Friend, and his best beloved. While the men of this world are vexing their spirits, and fretting under present disappointments, he dwells in a lonesome corner, mourning for his sins and follies. And at another time, while the children of vanity grow proud in public, and boast of their large possessions, and inheritances, he rejoices in secret, in the hope of glory, and takes divine delight in the fore-thought of his better inheritance among the saints: his conversation is in heaven; *Phil.* iii. 20.

I might run through all the exercises of the sanctified affections, and the various parts of the divine worship, and of the conduct of a saint among the children of men. With what humble fear does he entertain the mention of the name of God? With what deep self-abasement, and inward adoration? At the presence of sin how is his anger stirred? and his holy watchfulness when temptations appear? how does he labour and wrestle, fight and strive, lest he be overcome by the secret enemies of his soul? And as his bitterness of heart is unknown to the world, so *a stranger intermeddles not with his joy;* Prov. xiv. 10. He feeds on the same provision which his Lord Jesus did on earth, for it his meat and his drink to do the will of his Father which is in heaven; This is a feast to the christian, which the world knows not of; *John* iv. 32, 34.

II. The springs and principles of this life are hidden and unknown to the world; and therefore the world esteems many of the actions of a true christian very strange and unaccountable things, as we shall shew afterward, because they see not the springs of them.

The word of God, or the gospel, with all the hidden treasures of it, is the chief instrument, or means, whereby this divine life is wrought and supported in the soul. The true christian beholds the purity of God in the precepts; he reads grace, heaven, and glory, in the promises; he sees the words of

the bible in a divine light, and feeds sweetly on the hidden blessings of scripture, deriving life, and nourishment, and joy from it; whereas the carnal world go not far beyond the letters and syllables. The gospel, which is all light and glory to a saint, is hidden to them that are lost; 2 *Cor.* iv. 3. This same gospel is written in the heart of a christian, and is the principle of his life there. This is immortal and incorruptible, the seed of the word abiding in the heart; the image of the eternal God, drawn out in such characters as our nature can bear: For the written word is a transcript of God's holiness; and when it is inwrought into all the powers of a believing soul, it becomes a vital principle within him for ever. A believer is, as it were, cast in the very mould of the gospel; so the word signifies; *Rom.* vi. 17. This is the word hidden in the heart, that secures the saint from sin; *Ps.* cxix. 11.

The motives and springs that awaken a christian to keep up, and maintain this spiritual life, are things hidden from the eyes of the world; things eternal and invisible, 2 *Cor.* iv. 18. *While we look not at the things that are seen, that are temporal; but at the things that are unseen, and eternal;* we then count the joys or sorrows of this world, things of little importance; then we live like christians, and the life of our Lord Jesus is manifested, or copied out, in our lives; as *ver.* 10, 11.

The habits of grace and holiness in the hearts of believers, whence all the actions of the spiritual life proceed, are secret and hidden. Who knows how they were wrought at first? how this heavenly breath, this divine life was infused, which changed a dead sinner into a living saint? Our Saviour himself compares this work of the Spirit to the wind; *John* iii. 8. *We hear the sound,* we feel and see the effects of it, *but we know not whence it comes, nor whither it goes; so is every one that is born of the Spirit.* Who can describe those secret and almighty influences of the blessed Spirit on the mind and will of man, which work with such a sovereign, and yet such a gentle, and con-natural agency, that the believer himself hardly knows it, but by the gracious effects of it, and the blessed alterations wrought in his soul.

It is this glorious Agent, this Creator, this blessed Spirit, who is the uncreated principle of this life. The Spirit, as proceeding from our Lord Jesus Christ, begun this life at first in the soul: and the same glorious unseen power carries it on through all difficulties and oppositions, and will fulfil it in glory.

I must add also, that Christ himself, who is said to be our life in the verse following my text, is at present hidden from us; he dwells in the unseen world, and the heavens must receive him till the restitution of all things; *Acts* iii. 21. Christ Jesus is the

bread from heaven; *John* vi. 32, 33. by which the believer is nourished; he is the hidden manna, the divine food of souls: It is upon him the christian lives daily and hourly; it is upon the blood of the Lamb, which is carried up to the mercy-seat, that the believer lives for pardon and peace with God: It is upon the righteousness of his Lord and Head, that he lives for his everlasting acceptance before the throne; it is upon the grace and strength of Christ, that he rests and depends all the day, when he is called forth to encounter the boldest temptations, to fulfil the most difficult duties, or to sustain the heaviest strokes of a painful providence. "*Surely*, saith the saint, *in the Lord alone have I righteousness and strength;* Is. xlv. 24. In the Lord my Saviour, whom the world sees not; but I see him by the eye of faith."

I shall enlarge farther on this subject under the second doctrine.

Thus, whether we consider the spiritual acts and exercises of this christian life, or the springs and principles of it, still we shall find it has just reason to be called a secret, or a hidden life.

Before I proceed, I shall lay down these two cautions:

1st Caution. Though it is a hidden life, yet I entreat my christian friends, that they would not suffer it to be such a secret, as to be unknown to themselves. God has ordained it to be hidden, not that it might always be unknown to you, but that you might search after it with diligence; and that when you find yourselves possessed of it, you might rejoice in the evidences of your life and his love. Be not satisfied then, O ye professors of the gospel! until you have searched and found this divine life within you. What a poor life must that christian live, who goes from day to day, and from year to year, and still complains, I know not whether I am alive or no!

Labour, therefore, after self-acquaintance, since God has been pleased in his word, to furnish us with sufficient means to find out our estate; I *John* v. 17. These things I write unto you, says the apostle, that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God, and that ye may know that ye believe. It is a dishonour to the gospel of Christ, to abide always in darkness and doubtings, and to rest contented in so uncomfortable a frame. We are told in *Rev.* ii. 17. that those whose life is supported by this hidden manna, have also a white stone given them, with a new name in it, which no man knows, save he that receives it: that is, they have divine absolution and pardon of their sins, which was represented heretofore, in some courts of judicature, by the gift of a white stone; but surely, if my own name were written in it, I would use my utmost endeavours to read the inscription myself, though it may be a secret to the rest of mankind; then my God

and Saviour shall have the honour of his pardoning love, and then my soul shall enjoy the consolation.

2d Caution. Though it be a hidden life in the sacred operations and the springs of it, yet the world ought to see the blessed effects of it. We must *hold forth* to men *the word of life:* Phil. ii. 16. Let the world see that we live to God, and that by the secret power of his word in the gospel.

The christian life is no fantastic and visionary matter, that consists in warm imaginations, and pretences to inward light and rapture; it is a real change of heart and practice, from sin to holiness, and a turn of soul from earth toward heaven. It has been dressed up, indeed, like enthusiastic foolery, by the impious wits of men, and painted for a subject of ridicule and reproach. Thus the saints and holy martyrs have been clad in a fool's-coat, or a bear's-skin, but they are still men, and wise men too; they have been dressed up like devils, but they are still the sons of God. So secret piety has solid reason and scripture still on its side, whatever silly scandals have been cast upon it; there is no cause, therefore, to be ashamed of professing it. There is nothing in all the christian life, that a man needs to blush at. *We have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty*, knavery, and uncleanness, when we began to be christians; 2 *Cor.* iv. 2. It is our glory that we are alive to God, and we should be ashamed of nothing that either exercises or maintains this life. None of the duties of worship, none of the practices of godliness, that render religion honourable among men, and make God our Saviour appear glorious in the world, should be neglected by us, whenever we are called to practise or profess them.

The effects of this hidden life should not all be secret, though the springs of it are so; for christians are commanded to make their *light shine before men, that others may glorify their Father which is in heaven;* Mat. v. 14, 15, 16. The lights of the world must not place themselves under a bushel, and be contented to shine there useless and alone; we must give honour to God in public. And though we are commanded to practise such secrecy and self-denial in our deeds of charity, as may secure us from all ostentation and pride, yet we must sometimes make it appear too, that we do good to men, that christianity may have the glory of it. We must feed the hungry, we must clothe the naked, we must love all men, even our enemies, and discover to the world that we are christians, by noble and sublime practices of every virtue and every duty, as far as it is possible, even by the best works, to discover inward religion.

[This sermon may be divided here.]

I proceed now to draw some inferences from the hidden nature of the spiritual life.

I. And my first inference would teach you not to rest satisfied with any externals: for they who put forth no other acts of life, but what the world sees, are no true christians.

We eat, we drink, and sleep; that is the life of nature; we buy and sell, we labour and converse; that is the civil life; we trifle, visit, tattle, flutter, and rove among a hundred impertinencies, without any formed, or settled design what we live for; that is the idle life; and it is the kindest name that I can bestow upon it. We learn our creed, we go to church, we say our prayers, and read chapters or sermons; these are the outward forms of the religious life. And is this all? Have we no daily secret exercises of the soul in retirement and converse with God? No time spent with our own hearts? Are we never busied, in some hidden corner, about the affairs of eternity; Are there no seasons allotted for prayer, for meditation, for reading in secret, and self-enquiries? Nothing to do with God alone in a whole day together? Surely this can never be the life of a christian?

Remember, O man, there is nothing of all the labours or services, the acts of zeal or devotion, that thou canst practise in public, but a subtle hypocrite may so nearly imitate the same, that it will be hard to discover the difference. There is nothing of all these outward forms, therefore, that can safely and infallibly distinguish thee from a hypocrite and false professor; for the same actions may proceed from inward motions and principles widely different. If you would obtain any evidence that you are a christian indeed, you must make it appear to your own conscience by the exercises of the hidden life, and the secret transactions between God and your soul. He was not a Jew of old, who was one outwardly in the letter only; nor is he a christian, who has mere outward forms; but a Jew or a christian, in the sight of God, is such a one as hath the religion in his heart, and in spirit, *whose praise is not of men, but of God?* Rom. ii. 28, 29.

II. Inference. The life of a saint is a matter of wonder to the sinful world; for they know not what he lives upon. The sons of ambition follow after grandeur and power; the animals of pleasure pursue all the luxuries of sense; the miser hunts after money, and is ever digging for gold. It is visible enough what these wise men live upon. But the christian, who lives in the power and glory of the divine life, seeks after none of these, any farther than as duty leads him, and the supports and conveniencies of life are needful, in the present state of his habitation in the flesh. The sinner wonders what it is the saint aims at, while he neglects the tempting idols that himself adores, and despises the gilded vanities of a court, and abhors the guilty scenes of a voluptuous life. Christ and his children are, and will be,

signs and wonders to the age they live in; *Is.* viii. 18. compared with *Heb.* ii. 13.

The men of this world wonder what a christian can have to say to God in so many retiring hours as he appoints for that end; what strange business he can employ himself in; how he can lay out so much time in affairs, which the carnal mind has no notion of. On the other hand, the saint, when he is in a lively frame, thinks that all the intervals of his civil life, and all the vacant seasons that he can find between the necessary duties of his worldly station, are all little enough to transact affairs of such awful importance as he has to do with God, and little enough to enjoy those secret pleasures, which the stranger is unacquainted with. The children of God pray to their heavenly Father in secret, and they feel unknown refreshment and delight in it; and they are well assured, that *their Father who seeth in secret will hereafter reward them openly;* Mat. vi. 6.

It is no wonder, that the profane world reproaches true christians as dull, lifeless creatures, animals that have neither soul nor spirit in them, because they do not see them run to the same excess in things of the lower life. Alas! they know not that the life of a christian is on high; they see it not, for it is hidden; and therefore they wonder we are not busily engaged in the same practices and pursuits as they are; 1 *Pet.* iv. 4. *They think it strange that we run not to the same excess of riot.* The world sees nothing of our inward labour and strife against flesh and self, our sacred contest for the prize of glory; they know nothing of our earnest enquiries after an absent God, and a hidden Saviour; and least of all do they know the holy joys, and retired pleasures of a christian, because these are things which are seldom communicated to others; and therefore the world grows bold to call religion a melancholy thing, and the christian a mere mope. But the soul who lives above, who lives within sight of the world of invisibles, can despise the reproach of sinners.

III. Inference. See the reason why christians have not their passions so much engaged in things of this life as other men have, because their chief concern is about their better life, which is hidden and unseen. They can look upon fine equipages, gay clothes, and rich appearances in the world, without envy; they can survey large estates, and see many thousands gotten in haste by those that resolve to be rich, and yet not let loose one covetous wish upon them; they have a God whom they worship in secret, and trust his blessing to make them sufficiently rich in the way of diligence in their stations: they hope they shall have blessings mingled with their mean estate, and no sorrows added to their wealth.

They can find themselves exalted by providence to high sta-

tions in the world, and not to be puffed up in countenance, n swell at heart. If they are but watchful to keep their divine li vigorous they will distinguish themselves as christians, even scarlet and gold, and that by a glorious humility. They kno that all their advancements on earth are but mean and despicab things, in comparison of their highest hopes, and their promis crown in heaven. They can meet threatening danger, diseas and deaths, without those terrors that overwhelm the carnal si ner; for their better life shall never die. They can sustain lo ses, and sink in the world, when it comes by the mere providen of God, without their own culpable folly, and bear it with a hum ble resignation of spirit, and with much inward serenity a peace; for the things which they have lost, were not their lif all these were visible, but their life is hidden; *Phil.* iv. 12. know how to be abased, and how to be exalted; I know how abound, and to suffer want; I can do all these things throu Christ strengthening me: Christ, who is the principle of my i ward life. O! that the christians of our day had more of t sublime conduct, more of these noble evidences of the life christianity.

IV. Inference. How vain and needless a thing is it for christian to affect popularity and to set up for a shew in t world. How vain is it for him to be impatient, to appear a shine among men, for he has honours and treasures, joys a glories, that are incomparably greater, and yet a secret to t world. A christian's true life is hidden, and he should not be t fond of public and gay appearances. The apostle Peter giv advice how the christian women should behave themselves not the rest of the world do, who set themselves forth to public she with many ornaments of gold and pearl; but the believer shou adorn herself with modesty, and with every grace, in *the hidd man of the heart*; 1 Pet. iii. 4.

How unreasonable is it for us who profess the christian li to be cast down, if we are confined to an obscure station in t world! Was not the Lord of glory, when he came down earth to give us a pattern of the spiritual life, content to be o scure for thirty years together! Was he not unknown to me but as a common carpenter, or a poor carpenter's son! And those four years of appearance which he made as a preache how mean, how contemptible were the circumstances of life whi he chose? And shall we be impatient and fretful under the sam humbled estate? Do we dislike so divine a precedent? Mu we, like mushrooms of the earth, be exalted, and grow fond making a public figure, when the King of heaven was so po and lowly? We lose public honour and applause indeed, but pe

haps our hidden life thrives the better for it, when we resist the charms of grandeur.

Besides, this is not a christian's time for appearing, whilst Christ himself is absent and unseen. The believer's shining-time is not yet come; but the marriage-day of the Lamb is hastening, and the bride is making herself ready. The general resurrection is our great shining-day: *When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory:* Col. iii. 4. and the christian is content to stay for his robes of light, and his public honours, till the dawn of that glorious morning. Nor shall we dare to be censorious of those who make a poor figure, and but mean appearance in the world; perhaps they are some of Christ's hidden ones; they promise but little, and shew but little, either wit or parts, prudence or power, skill or influence; and perhaps they have but little too; but they know God, they trust in Christ, they live a divine life, and have glorious communications from heaven in secret daily, they make daily visits to the court of glory, and are visited by condescending grace. You see in all these instances, that popularity and shew are not at all necessary for a christian.

V. Inference. How exceeding difficult is it for those who are exalted to great and public stations in the world to maintain lively christianity! They have need of great and uncommon degrees of grace to maintain this hidden life. *How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!* These are our Saviour's own words; *Mark* x. 23. and he gave this reason for it, *ver.* 24. because it is so hard for those that have riches, not to trust in them, not to live entirely upon them, and make them their very life.

How hard is it for men in high posts of honour, to take due care that their graces thrive, while they are all day engaged, either in the fatigues of office, in state and pomp of their own, or in everlasting attendances on the will of some superior; so that they have few moments in a day, wherein they are capable of retiring, and holding any converse with themselves or with heaven. But O! how pleasant is it to such as are advanced in the providence of God, and have a value for their hidden life, to steal an hour of retirement from the burden of their public cares! How sweet is the recovery of a few minutes, and how well filled up with active devotion! The secret life of a christian grows much in the closet, and without a retreat from the world it cannot grow. Abandon the secret chamber, and the spiritual life will decay: Doubtless many of you can witness that you have found it so; and your own mournful experience echoes to the words of our ministry in this point.

There was an ancient philosopher, who, when he had lost his riches in a storm at sea, gave thanks to providence, under a heathen name; "I thank thee, fortune, that hast now forced me to retire, and to live within my cloak;" that is, upon the supports of philosophy, in meaner circumstances of life. How much more should the christian be pleased with a private station, who has the supports of the gospel to live upon, and to sweeten his retirements! How cautious should christians be, therefore, of the management of all the public affairs of their civil life, lest they do any that should hurt their secret or religious life! We should be still enquiring, "Will such sort of company to which I am now invited; such a gainful trade which I am ready to engage in; such a course of life which now lies before me; tempt me to neglect my secret converse with God? Does it begin to alienate my heart from heaven, and things unseen? then let me suspect and fear it." Be afraid, christians, of what grieves the blessed Spirit of Christ, who is the principle of your life and may provoke him to retire from you. Be diligent in such enquiries, be very watchful and jealous of every thing that would call your thoughts outward, and keep them too long abroad. Christians should live much at home, for theirs is a hidden life.

VI. Inference. We may see here divine wisdom in contriving the ordinances of the gospel, with such plainness, and such simplicity, as best serves to promote the hidden life of a christian. Pomp and ceremony, gilded and sparkling ornaments, are ready to call the soul abroad, to employ it in the senses, and divert it from that spiritual improvement, which the secret life of a christian requires, and which gospel-institutions were designed for.

You see in the heathen world, and you see in popish countries, that the gay splendours of worship tempt the hearts of the worshippers to rest in forms, and to forget God; and we may fear the greatest part of the people lay under the same danger in the days of Judaism. I grant indeed, that where pompous and glittering rites of religion are of special divine appointment, and were designed to typify the future glories of a more spiritual church and worship; there they might hope for divine aids to lead their minds onward beyond the type to those designed glories. But carnal worshippers are the bulk of any sect or profession. All mankind, by nature, is ready to take up with the forms of godliness, and neglect the secret power. We naturally pay too much reverence to shining formalities and empty shews. Set a christian to read the most spiritual parts of gospel, on one page of the bible, and let some scene of the history be finely graven, and painted on the opposite

side; his holy meditations will be endangered by his eyes, fair figures and colours attract the sight, and tempt the soul off from refined devotion.

I cannot think it any advantage to christian worship, to have churches well adorned by the statuary and the painter; nor can gay altar-pieces improve the communion service. While gaudy glittering images attract and entertain the outward sense, the soul is too much attached to the animal, to keep itself at a distance; while the sight is regaled and feasted, the sermon runs to waste, and the hidden life withers and starves. When the ear is soothed with a variety of fine harmony, the soul is too often allured away from spiritual worship, even though a divine song attend the music. Our Saviour therefore, in much wisdom, and in much mercy, has appointed blessed ordinances for his church, with such plainness and simplicity, as may administer most support and nourishment to the secret life. Thus I have finished the remarks on the hidden life of a christian, considered as to its spiritual exercises in this present world.

I proceed to consider, in what respects this life is hidden, as it is more usually called eternal life, or to be exercised and enjoyed in heaven.

And here we must confess, that we are much at a loss to say any thing more than the scripture hath said before us. *Life and immortality*, indeed, *are brought to light by the gospel of Christ*, in far brighter measures than the former ages and dispensations were acquainted with; 1 *Tim.* i. 10. But still, what the apostle says concerning all the blessings of the gospel, we may repeat emphatically concerning heaven, that eye hath not seen, that ear hath not heard, that it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive; nor indeed hath God himself revealed but a very small part of the things he hath prepared, in the future world, for them that love him; 1 *Cor.* ix. 10. *It doth not yet appear what we shall be*; the glory of that state is yet a great secret to us; 1 *John* iii. 2. We know much better what it is not, than what it is: we can define it best by negatives. Absence from the weaknesses, sins, and sorrows of this life, is our best and largest account of it, whether we speak of the separate state, or the heaven of the resurrection.

The veil of flesh and blood divides us from the world of spirits; we know not the manner of their life in the state of separation: we are at an utter loss as to their stations and residences; what relation they bear to any part of this material creation; whether they dwell in thin airy vehicles, and are inhabitants of some starry world, or planetary region; or whether they subsist in their pure intellectual nature, and have nothing to do

with any thing corporeal, till their dust be recalled to life. We are unacquainted with the laws by which they are governed, and the methods of their converse: we know little of the businesses they are employed in, those glorious services for their God and their Saviour, in which they are favoured with assistant angels; and little are we acquainted with their joys, which are unspeakable and full of glory. The very language of that world, is neither to be spoken nor understood by us; St. Paul heard some of the words of it, and had a faint glimpse of the sense of them; but he could not repeat them again to mortal ears; nor had he power, nor leave to tell us the meaning of them; 2 *Cor.* xii. 4. For, *whether he was in the body, at that time, or out of the body,* he himself was not able to determine.

And as for the heaven of the resurrection; what sort of bodies shall be raised from the dust, for perfect spirits to dwell in, is as great a secret. A spiritual body is a mystery to the wisest divines and philosophers; where our habitation shall be, and what our special employment through the endless ages of immortality, are among the hidden unsearchables. The most that we know, is, that we shall be made like to Christ, and we shall be where he is, to behold his glory; 1 *John* iii. 2. and *John* xvii. 24.

If the eternal life of the saints be so much a secret at present, we may draw these two or three inferences from it.

I. Inference. How necessary is it for a christian to keep faith awake and lively, that he may maintain his acquaintance with the spiritual and unseen world! It is faith that converses with invisibles: *faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen;* Heb. xi. 1. It is faith that deals in hidden traffic, and grows rich in treasures that are out of sight. It is by faith in the Son of God, we live this spiritual life, by faith in an absent Saviour; *Gal.* ii. 20. *Whom having not seen we love; and though we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice;* 1 Pet. i. 8. Let the christian, therefore, maintain a holy jealousy, lest too much converse with the things of sense, dull the eye of his faith, or weaken the hand of it. Let him put his faith into perpetual exercise, that he may live within the view of those glories that are hidden from sense; that he may keep his hold of eternal life; that he may support his hopes, and secure his joys. Until we can live by sight, let us *walk by faith;* 2 Cor. v. 7.

Though the life of heaven be hidden, yet so much of it is revealed as to give faith leave to lay hold of it; and yet not so much, as to make the hand of faith needless. It is brought down by our Lord Jesus Christ in the gospel, within the view of faith, that we might live in expectation of it, and be animated to the

glorious pursuit; but it is not brought within the reach of sense, for we are now in a state of trial; and this is not the proper time nor place for sight and enjoyment.

II. Inference. How little is death to be dreaded by a believer, since it will bring the soul to the full possession of its hidden life in heaven! It is a dark valley that divides between this world and the next; but it is all a region of light and blessedness beyond it. We are now borderers on the eternal world, and we know but too little of that invisible country, Approaching death opens the gates to us, and begins to give our holy curiosity some secret satisfaction; and yet how we shrink backward when that glorious unknown city is opening upon us! and are ready to beg and pray that the gates might be closed again: "O! for a little more time, a little longer continuance in this lower visible world!" This is the language of the fearful believer: But it is better to have our christian courage wrought up to a divine height, and to say, "*Open ye everlasting gates, and be ye lift up, O ye immortal doors*, that we may enter into the place where *the King of Glory is*." There we shall see God, the great unknown, and rejoice in his overflowing love. We shall see him not as we do on earth, darkly, through the glass of ordinances; but inferior spirits shall converse with the Supreme Spirit, as bodies do with bodies; that is face to face; 1 *Cor.* xiii. 12.

There shall we behold Christ our Lord in the dignity of his character as Mediator, in the glory of his kingdom, and the all-sufficiency of his godhead; and we shall be for ever with him. There shall we see millions of blessed spirits, who have lived the same hidden life as we do, and passed through this vale of tears, with the same attending difficulties and sorrows, and by the same divine assistances. They were unknown, and covered with dust as we are, while they dwelt in flesh, but they appear all-glorious and well known in the world of spirits, and exult in open and immortal light: We shall see them, and we shall triumph with them in that day; we shall learn their language, and taste their joys: we shall be partakers of the same glory, which Christ our life, diffuses all around him, on the blessed inhabitants of that intellectual world.

III. Inference. How glorious is the difference between the two parts of the christian's life, *viz.* the spiritual life on earth, and the perfection of eternal life in heaven; when all that is now hidden shall be revealed before men and angels! Come now, and let us take occasion from this discourse, to let loose our meditations one stage beyond death and the separate state, even to the morning of the resurrection, and the full and public assembly of all the saints. O what an illustrious appearance! What a numerous and noble army of new creatures! Creatures that were

hidden in this world among the common herd of mankind, and their bodies hidden in the grave, and mingled with common dust, rising all at once, at the sound of a trumpet, into public light and glory; the same persons, indeed, that once inhabited mortality, but in far different equipage and array. The christian, on earth, is like the rough diamond among the common pebbles of the shore; in the resurrection-day the diamond is cut and polished, and set in a tablet of gold. All that inward worth and lustre of holiness and grace, which are now hidden, shall be then visible and public before the eyes of the whole creation. Then the saints shall be known by their shining, *in the day when the Lord makes up his jewels;* Mal. iii. 17. When the spirits of the just made perfect in all the beauties of holiness, shall return to their former mansions, and become men again; when their bodies are raised from the dust, in the likeness of the body of our blessed Lord, how shall all the saints shine in the kingdom of their Father, though in the kingdoms of this world they were obscure and undistinguished! They shall appear, in that day, as the meridian sun breaking from a long and dark eclipse; and the sun is too bright a being to be unknown; *Mat.* xiii. 43.

What is there in a poor saint here, that discovers what he shall be hereafter? How mean his appearance now! how magnificent in that day? What was there in Lazarus on the dung-hill, when the dogs licked his sores, that could lead us to any thought what he should be in the bosom of Abraham? What is there in

What is all the dead lustre of metals, and silks, and shining stones, to the living rays of divine grace springing up, and shooting into full glory? Faith into sight, hope into enjoyment, patience into joy and victory, and love into its own perfection? Then all the hidden virtues and graces of the saints, shall appear like the stars at midnight, in an uncloudy sky. Then shall it be made known to all the world, these were the men that wept and prayed in secret; it shall be published then in the great assembly, these were the persons who wrestled hard with their secret sins, that sought the face of God, and his strength, in their private chambers, and they are made more than overcomers through him that hath loved them. The poor trembling christian who lived this hidden and divine life, but scarce knew it himself nor durst appear among the churches on earth, shall lift up his head, and rejoice amidst the church triumphant; and the hidden seed of grace, that was watered with so many secret tears, shall spring up into a rich and illustrious havest. This is the day which shall bring to light a thousand works of hidden piety, for the eternal honour of Christ and the saints; as well as the *hidden things of darkness*, to the sinners' everlasting confusion; *Mat.* xxv. and 1 *Cor.* iv. 5.

Thus the spiritual life of christians, which was concealed in this world, shall appear in the other in full brightness; and they themselves shall be amazed to see what divine honours, Jesus the Judge shall cast upon their poor secret services and sufferings.

But in what supreme glory shall their life display itself, when both parts of the human compound are rejoined after so long a separation! This is life eternal indeed, and joy unspeakable. How gloriously shall the perfections and honours, both of body and mind, unfold themselves, and rise far above all that they heard, or saw, or could conceive! Each of them surprized, like the queen of Sheba in the court of Solomon, shall confess with thankful astonishment and joy, that not one half of it was told them, even in the word of God. "And was this the crown, shall the christian say, for which I fought on earth at so poor and feeble a rate? And was this the prize for which I ran with a pace so slow and lazy? And were these the glories which I sought with so cold and indifferent a zeal in yonder world? O shameful indifference! O surprizing glories! O undeserved prize and crown! Had I imagined how bright the blessing was, which lay hidden in the promise, surely all my powers had been animated to a warmer pursuit. Could I have seen what I ought to have believed; had I but taken in all that was told me concerning this glorious and eternal life, surely I would have ventured through many deaths

to secure the possession of it. O guilty negligence! and cri unbelief! But thy sovereign mercy, O my God, has pard both, and made me possessor of the fair inheritance. Beho bow at thy feet for ever, and adore the riches of overflo grace. *Amen.*

SERMON X.

The Hidden Life of a Christian.

Col. iii. 3.—For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

THE SECOND PART.

IT is to the christian converts who were at Colosse, that the apostle addresses himself, in this strange language: Ye are dead, and yet I tell you where your life is. This divine writer delights sometimes to surprize his readers, by joining such opposites, and uniting such distant extremes. But can a dead person have any life in him? Yes, and a noble one too, ye are dead to the world, and dead to sin, but ye have a life of another kind than that which belongs to the sinners of this world: your life is spiritual and holy; theirs is sinful, and engaged in the works of the flesh: Your life is heavenly, and seeks the things which are above; theirs is derived from the earth, and grovels in the dust: Your life is everlasting, for your souls shall live for ever in a glorious state, and your bodies shall be raised from death into equal immortality, and a partnership of the same glory; but their best life is only a temporal one, and when that is at an end, all their joys, and their hopes are for ever at an end too, and their eternal sorrows begin.

But this life of a christian is a hidden life. That was the first doctrine I raised from the text. Both the operations and the springs of it, are a secret to the world, and the future glories of it, when it is most properly called eternal life, are still a greater secret, and much more unknown: Yet, saith the apostle, I can acquaint you where the springs of it lie, and whence all the future glories of it are to be derived; they are hidden in God, with our Lord Jesus Christ. Now by giving so short a hint, in a word or two, where this our life is hid, he has said something greater, and brighter, and more sublime, concerning it, that if he had shewn us, from a high mountain, at noon-day, all the kingdoms of this world, with all the dazzling glories of them, and then pointed downward, "there your life is."

Let this therefore be the second doctrine, and the subject of our present meditations, that the life of a christian is hidden with Christ in God. It is hidden in God, as the first original and eternal spring of it, and entrusted with Christ as a faithful Medi-

ator; it is hid in God, where our Lord Jesus Christ is, and he is appointed to take care of it for us; for he also is called our life; verse 4.

The method I shall take for the improvement of this truth, is, to explain these words of the apostle more at large, and then deduce some inferences from them.

The *first* enquiry will arise, in what respect the christian's life is said to be hidden in God? And, *secondly*, What is meant by its being hidden with Christ?

I. *First*, In what respect is the life of a christian said to be hidden in God?

The word God is taken in scripture, either in general for the divine nature, which is the same in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; or, in particular, for the person of the Father. And I do not see any absolute necessity to determine, precisely, which was the meaning of the apostle in this place. The three particulars by which I shall endeavour to explain it, will include both. The life of a christian is hidden in God; that is, in the all-sufficiency of the divine nature, in the purpose of the divine will, and in the secret engagements of the Father to his Son Jesus Christ, in the covenant of redemption.

1. The christian's life is hidden in the all-sufficiency of the divine nature. And there are immense stores of life, of every kind, hidden in God, in this sense. This whole world of beings, that have, and have not souls, with all the infinite varieties of the life of plants, animals, and angels, were hidden in this fruitful and inexhaustible fund of the divine all-sufficiency, before God began to create a world. All things were then hidden in God; for of him are all things, and from him all things proceeded; Rom. xi. 36. Now this all-sufficiency of God consists in those powers and perfections, whereby he is able to do all things for his creatures, and ready to do all for his saints; these are most eminently his wisdom, his almightiness, and his goodness.

There are inconceivable riches of goodness and grace in God, which are employed in furnishing out life for all his saints; and all the unknown preparations of future glory are the effects of his grace. Eph. ii. 4.—*God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ;* and he did it for this purpose, *that in the ages to come, he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus;* ver. 7. Not all the goodness that appears in the rich provision he hath made for all the natural world of creatures, nor all the overflowing bounties of his providence, since the first creation, are equal to those unsearchable treasures of mercy

and goodness, which he hath employed for the spiritual welfare, and eternal life and happiness of his own chosen children; and in the secret of this grace were all the blessings of his covenant hidden from eternity.

The divine wisdom is another part of his all-sufficiency. There are in God infinite varieties of thought and counsel, riches of knowledge, and wisdom unsearchable; and he hath made these abound in his new creation, as well as in the old; in the supernatural, as well as in the natural world. Eph. i. 8. *He hath abounded towards us*, sinners, in this work of salvation, *in all wisdom and prudence*. What surprizing wisdom appears in the vital powers of an animal, even in the life of brutes that perish? What glorious contrivance, and divine skill, to animate clay, and make a fly, a dog, or a lion of it? What sublime advances of wisdom to create a living man, and join these two distinct extremes, flesh and spirit, in such a vital union, that has puzzled the philosophers of all ages, and constrained some of them to confess and adore a God? And what a superior work of divinity, is it, to turn a dead sinner into a living saint, here on earth? and then to adorn a heaven, with all its proper furniture, for the eternal life and habitation of his sons and his daughters? What divine skill is required here? What immense profusion of wisdom, to form bodies of immortality and glory, for every saint, out of the dust of the grave, and the ashes of martyred christians? Our spiritual and our eternal life are hid in the wisdom of God.

The power of God is his all-sufficience too. The power that quickens and raises a soul to this divine life, must be almighty; Eph. i. 19, 20. It is the same exceeding greatness of his power that works in us who believe, which wrought in our Lord Jesus Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right-hand in heavenly places. It is the same powerful word *that commanded the light to shine out of darkness, that shone into our hearts*, when he wrought the knowledge of Christ there; 2 Cor. iv. 6. and when he commanded us, who lay among the dead, to awake, and arise, and live. Was it not a noble instance of power, to spread abroad these heavens of unknown circumference, with all the rolling worlds of light in them, the planets and the stars? And the same hand is mighty enough, if these were not sufficient, to build a brighter heaven, fit for the saints to live in during all their immortality, and to furnish them with vital powers that shall be incorruptible and everlasting. Thus the life of the saints is hidden in the almightiness of God, as well as in his wisdom and goodness. Thus it is contained in the all-sufficience of the divine nature, and each part of it is ready to be produced into act, in every proper season.

2. The life of a christian is hidden in the purposes of the

divine will. And in this sense, the whole gospel, with all it wondrous glories and mysteries, is said to be hid in God; Eph iii. 9. When St. Paul preached *among the gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ*, he made all men see something of that mystery, which from the beginning of the world had been hid in God And if this be compared with Eph. i. 9. we shall find that this mystery of the will, or good-pleasure of God, was that which he eternally purposed in himself.

There is not one dead sinner awakened, and called into this divine and spiritual life here, or that shall ever be possessed of life eternal hereafter, but it was contained in the eternal secret purpose, and merciful design of God, before the world began For it is a very mean conceit, and a disgraceful opinion concerning the great God, to imagine that he should exert his power to work life in souls, here in time, by any new purposes, or sudden designs, occasioned by any works or merit of theirs, which he had not formed and decreed in himself, long before he made man. This doctrine would represent God as a mutable being but we know that he is unchangeable. There is nothing new in God; and his immutability is that perfection of his nature which secures the performance of this divine purpose, and the life of every christian.

3. I might add, in the third place, that the life of a christian is hidden in the unknown engagements of the Father to his Son Jesus Christ the Mediator. That sacred and divine transaction betwixt the Father and the Son, is often intimated in the holy scriptures, and some of the promises of that covenant are there represented; Ps. lxxxix. 19—28, 29—36, &c. *I have laid help upon one that is mighty; my mercy will I keep for him for ever, and my covenant shall stand fast with him: his seed will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven.* Then when *the covenant of peace was between them both*, as it is expressed in Zech. vi. 13. then did the Father promise that he should have *seed to serve him;* Ps. xxii. 30. and this must be a living seed and they must be raised up from among dead sinners, and they shall be made living saints in the world of grace, and in the world of glory.

Many of these promises are transcribed as it were, into the covenant of grace, and they are written down in scripture for our present consolation and hope; and many others are, doubtless concealed from all but Jesus the Mediator; they are hidden from men and angels, and reserved to be known, by surprizing accomplishment, in the future bright ages, beyond the date of time, and to entertain the long successions of our eternity. Now the truth and faithfulness of God are those attributes of his nature which secure this covenant, and all the divine engagements of it

both those which are revealed to the children of men, and those that are known only to the Son and the Father: But it is sufficiently evident, that all the degrees and powers of the spiritual and eternal life of the saints, with all the graces, glories and blessings that shall ever attend them, are hidden and laid up in these sacred engagements and promises.

II. This leads me to the *second* enquiry; and that is, what is meant by these words, *with Christ*, in my text? and how the christian *life is hid with Christ?*

If I would branch this into three particulars also, I should express them thus:

1. Our life is hidden with Christ, as he is the great Treasurer and Dispenser of all divine benefits to the children of men. This is the high office to which the Father hath appointed him; and this is the character that he sustains; and he is abundantly furnished for the execution of this great trust. In this sense, all the stores of life and blessing, that ever shall be bestowed on the sinful race of Adam, are laid up in the hands of Christ, the Son of God.—*It hath pleased the Father, that in him all fulness should dwell;* Col. i. 19. *And he was full of grace and truth, that of his fulness we might receive grace for grace;* John i. 14—16. That is, a variety of graces and blessings answerable to that rich variety, with which our Lord Jesus Christ, the High-treasurer of heaven, was furnished from the hand of the Father. And to this purpose, perhaps, John v. 26. may be interpreted, compared with ver. 21. *As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; that as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them, even so the Son may quicken whom he will.*

The blessed Spirit itself, as it is the great promise of the New Testament, and the glorious gift of God to men, was communicated to the Son, and by him bestowed upon us; for he went to heaven to receive the promise of the Spirit from the Father, and he shed it forth upon the apostles and the believers; Acts ii. 33. It is this Spirit who gave miraculous gifts to them heretofore, that is the immediate principle, or worker, of divine life in dead souls now: And it is by this same Spirit, that he shall raise our dead bodies from the grave; Rom. viii. 11. He is the spring of our spiritual and eternal life; and he is dispensed to us from the Father, by the hands of the Son.

And here it is proper to take notice of the special manner wherein the Lord Jesus Christ is the treasurer, or keeper of life, and all divine benefits for the saints, and becomes the dispenser thereof to his people: He is ordained to stand in the relation of a

head to them, and they are his body, his members. Thus our life is hidden with Christ, as he is the vital head of all his saints. Their life is hid with Christ, as the spirits and springs of life, for all the members in the natural body are said to be contained in the head. *Christ is the head of his own mystical body*; Eph. iv. 14—16. *from whom the whole body, fitly joined together*, maketh increase to its own edification: it is the same vital spirit that runs through head and members.——*He that is joined to the Lord, is one Spirit*; 1 Cor. vi. 17. and therefore partakes of the same life.

Thus you see, that though the life of a christian is hidden in God, in the all-sufficiency of his nature, and the purposes of his will; yet our Lord Jesus Christ, as Mediator, is entrusted to keep it for him, and dispense it to him.

2. Our life is hid with Christ, as he is our forerunner, and the possessor of life, spiritual and eternal, in our name. And this may be described in a variety of instances, according to the various parts, as well as the several advancing degrees of our spiritual life, and the perfection of it in life eternal. When his human nature was first formed complete in holiness, it was a pledge and assurance, that we should be one day completely holy too; for, as is the head so must the members be. In the original sanctification of his spirit, flesh, and blood, we may read the certain future sanctification of every believing soul, with its body too See John xvii. 19. and Heb. ii. 11.

Again; when his body was raised from the dead, it was a pledge and pattern of our being raised from a death in sin, unto the spiritual life of a saint, as well as a certain assurance of the resurrection of our bodies into future glory. The first is evident from Eph. ii. 6. *When we were dead in sin, he hath quickened us together with Christ.* And Rom. vi. 4. *As Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we must also walk in newness of life; for we are planted in the likeness of his resurrection;* ver. 5. And in 1 Cor. xv. 12, &c. the apostle builds his whole argument of the resurrection of the bodies of saints who are dead, from the rising of our Lord Jesus Christ out of his grave: *For Christ being risen from the dead;* ver. 20. *is become the first-fruits of them that slept.* And as all that are united to Adam, by having him for their head must die; so all who are one with Christ, and have him for their head, shall be made alive: which seems to be the meaning of the 22d verse: *As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive.*

When he ascended into the heavens, it was not merely in his own name, but in ours too, to take possession of the inheritance for the saints in light. Heb. vi. 20. Our hope enters within the vail, whither Jesus the forerunner is for us entered. And

when he sat down at the right-hand of God in the heavenly places, it was as the great exemplar of our future advancement, and thereby gave us assurance, that we should sit down there too: and therefore the apostle, in the language of faith, anticipates these divine honours, and applies them to the Ephesians beforehand: *God hath raised us up together*, says he, *with Christ, and hath made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.*

It was *through the blood of the everlasting covenant*, that Jesus *the great Shepherd of the sheep, was brought again from the dead;* and it was *the God of peace* who raised him; Heb. xiii. 20. And it is by virtue of his own blood, and righteousness, that he, who once took our sins upon him, is now discharged: It is through his own sufferings that he appears with acceptance before the throne, and enjoys a divine life in the unchangeable favour of God; and all this as our head, surety, and representative, giving us assurance hereby, that we, through the blood of the same covenant, shall be brought again from the dead too: that we through the virtue of the same righteousness, and all-sufficiency of the same sacrifice, shall appear hereafter before God in glory, and stand in his eternal favour; and as an earnest of it, we enjoy a life of holy peace and acceptance with God in this world, through the same all-sufficient blood and righteousness: For he *appears in the holy of holies, in* heaven itself, *in the presence of God for us*; Heb. ix. 24. He secures all the glories and blessings of spiritual and eternal life for us, as he has taken possession of them in our name.

2. Our life of grace, and especially our life of glory, may be said to be hidden with Christ, because he dwells in heaven, where God resides in glory; God, in whom is our life. He is set down on the right-hand of the Majesty on high; Heb. xii. 2. There our eternal life is. The things which are above, are the objects of our joyful hope, *where Christ is at the right-hand of God*; Col. iii. 1. It is the short, but sublime description of our heaven, that we shall be *present with the Lord*, we shall be where Christ is, to *behold his glory*; 2 Cor. v. 8. and John xvii. 24. And shall possess all that unknown and rich variety of blessings which are reserved for us in heavenly places, whither Christ our Lord is ascended. Thus I have endeavoured to explain, in the largest and most comprehensive sense, what we are to understand by the life of a christian hidden with Christ in God: It is reserved in the all-sufficiency, the purposes, and the engagements of God, under the care of the Mediator, and in the presence of Christ.

[This sermon may be divided here.]

The use I shall make of this doctrine, is, to draw four

inferences from it for our instruction, and three for our consolation.

The inferences for our instructions are such as these:

1st Instruction. What a glorious person is the poorest, meanest christian? He lives by communion with God the Father and the Son; for his life is hid with Christ in God; 1 John i. 3.—"Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full; the joy that you may justly derive from so glorious an advancement.

A true christian does not live upon the creatures, but upon the infinite and almighty Creator: upon God who created all things by Jesus Christ. Created beings were never designed to be his life and his happiness; they are too mean and coarse a fare for a christian to feed upon, in order to support his best life: He converses with them indeed, and transacts many affairs that relate to them in this lower world: While he dwells in flesh and blood, his heavenly Father has appointed these to be a great part of his business; but he does not make them his portion and his life. They possess but the lower degrees of his affection: He rejoices in the possession of them, as though he rejoiced not; and he weeps for the loss of them, as though he wept not: He enjoys the dearest comforts of life, as though he had them not; and buys with such a holy indifference, as though he were not to possess; 1 Cor. vii. 29, 30. for the fashion of them passes away But the food of his life is infinite and immortal. It is no wonder that a man of this world lets loose all the powers of his soul in the pursuit and enjoyment of creatures, for they are his portion and his life. But it is quite otherwise with a christian: he has a nobler original, and sustains a higher character: His divine life must have divine food to support it.

Let our thoughts take a turn to some bare common, or to the side of a wood, and visit the humble christian there; we shall find him cheerful, perhaps, at his dinner of herbs, with all the circumstances of meanness around him: But what a glorious life he leads in that straw-cottage, and poor obscurity! The great and gay world shut him out from them with disdain: He lives, as it were, hidden in a cave of the earth; but the godhead dwells with him there. The high and lofty one that inhabits eternity, comes down to dwell with the humble and contrite soul; Is. lvii. 15. God, who is the spring of life, comes down to communicate fresh supplies of this life continually. *He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God;* 1 John iv. 16. He is not alone, for the Father is with him; John xvi. 32. The Father and the Son come and manifest themselves unto him, within the walls of that hovel, in so divine a manner, as they never do to the men of this

world, in their robes and palaces: John xiv. 22, 23. And that he may have the honour of the presence of the blessed Trinity, his *body is the temple of the Holy Ghost;* 1 Cor. iii. 16. and vi. 19. O! the wonderful condescensions of divine grace, and the surprizing honours that are done to a humble saint! How is this habitation graced! Heaven is there, for God and Christ are there; and who knows what heavenly guards surround him! what flights of attending angels? "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent down to minister unto them that shall be heirs of salvation? Heb. i. 14. But our Lord Jesus Christ is now unseen, God and angels are unseen; the christian's company belong to the invisible world: He lives a hidden, but a divine life; his life is hid with Christ in God.

IId Instruction. See how it comes to pass that christians are capable of doing such wonders, at which the world stands amazed. The spring of their life is almighty; it is hid in God. It is by this divine strength they subdue their sinful natures, their stubborn appetites, and their old corrupt affections: It is by the power of God, derived through Jesus Christ, they bend the powers of their souls unto a conformity to all the laws of God and grace; and they yield their bodies as instruments to the same holy service, while the world wonders at them, that they should fight against their own nature, and be able to overcome it too.

And as they deny themselves in all the alluring instances of sinful pleasure, under the influence of almighty grace, so they endure sufferings, in the sharpest degree, from the hands of God, without murmuring. And when they have laboured night and day, and performed surprizing services for God in the world, they are yet contented to submit to smarting and heavy trials from the hands of their heavenly Father, without being angry at their God: they know he loves them, and he designs all things shall work together for their good.

Besides all this, they bear dreadful persecutions, cruel mockings, and scourings, and tortures, from the hands of men, and go through all the sorrows of martyrdom. What noble instances and miracles of this kind did the primitive age furnish us with, so that their tormentors were amazed? They saw not the secret springs of divine life which supported them; they knew not the grace of God and the power of Christ, by which the christians were upheld in all their labours and their sufferings. The spring of their life was almighty, but it was hidden from the eyes of men: It was concealed and reserved with Christ in God.

Read the labours and the sufferings of St. Paul; 2 Cor. xi. 23.

"In stripes above measure, in prisons frequent, in deaths often: He was beaten with rods, he was stoned, he suffered shipwreck; in perpetual perils by land and sea, in weariness, in painfulness; in watchings and fastings, in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness. One would think his bones were iron, and his flesh were brass. He was invisibly supported by Christ the spring of his life. Read his wondrous virtues and self-denial; Phil. iv. 11, 12, 13. I know how to be abased and how to abound; I can be full, and be hungry; I can possess plenty, and I can suffer want; I can do all things through Christ strengthening me. This was the fountain of his life and strength. I acknowledge, says he, in another place, that I am nothing, I have no sufficiency of myself to think so much as one good thought: But all my sufficiency is of God, in whom my life is hid; 2 Cor. iii. 5. And with what a devout zeal does he ascribe his life to Christ, in that glorious amassment of spiritual paradoxes! Gal. ii. 20. "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live: yet, not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Therefore I can be delivered to death daily for Jesus Christ's sake? troubled and perplexed, and yet not in despair be cast down, and not be destroyed; because I believe that the life of Jesus must be made manifest in my mortal flesh, and he which raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise us up also by Jesus and shall present us with you; 2 Cor. iv. 14.

IIId Instruction. See whither a dead sinner must go to attain spiritual and eternal life, and whither a decaying dying christian must go for the recruit of his fainting life too; it is to God by Jesus Christ, for it is all hidden with Christ in God.

It vain shall a man who is dead in trespasses and sins, toil and labour, and hope to attain life any other way. God is the spring of all life, and he has trusted it to the hands of Jesus Christ: *I am the way, the truth and the life*, says our Saviour John xiv. 6. No man can have life without coming to the living Father; and no man cometh to the Father but by me. Seneca and Plato, with their moral lectures, and the writings of human philosophy, may give a man new garments, may make his outward life appear much better than before; they may teach him in some measure to govern his passions too, and subdue some of the fleshly appetites; but they cannot raise him to the love of God, to the hatred of every sin, to the well grounded hopes of the favour of God, the blessed expectation of a holy immortality, and a preparation for heaven. They cannot give the man a new life: He must be born again of the Spirit of Christ, or he can never become a living christian.

And in vain would the poor backsliding christian, with

his withering decaying graces, recruit and renew his divine life, without applying himself afresh to Jesus Christ: While he forgets Christ, he must go on to wither and decay still. There is nothing in earth or heaven can supply the utter absence of our Lord Jesus Christ. When the stream of spiritual life ebbs or runs low, it is not to be quickened, recovered, and increased, but by new supplies from the fountain which is on high. Remember, O degenerate christian, remember whence it was you derived your first life, when you were once dead in trespasses and sins; fly to the Saviour by new exercises of faith and dependance, mourning, in all humility, for your unwatchful walking, and your absence from the Lord. Commit your soul afresh to his care, exert your utmost powers, and beg of him renewed instances of the living Spirit, that the face of your soul may be like a watered garden, and the beauty of the divine life may be recovered again.

IVth Instruction. See the reason why a lively christian desires and delights to be so much, and so often, where God and Christ are; for his life is with them.

This was the divine temper and practice of the saints under a much darker dispensation than what we enjoy. How does the holy soul of David pant and long for the presence of God! and he brings even his animal nature, the very ferments of his flesh and blood, into his devotions; Ps. lxiii. 1. *My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee.* Ps. lxxxiv. 2. *My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.* In all the various and fervent language of sacred passion and transport, he breathes after God, who is the strength of his life and his salvation; *Ps.* xxvii. 1. The Jewish saints cleaved to the Lord, *for he was their life, and the length of their days;* Deut. xxx. 20.

And what sweet delight does St. Paul take in mentioning the very name of Christ? How does he dwell upon it in long sentences, and loves to repeat the blessed sound! How often does he rejoice in the hope of dwelling with him hereafter, and persuades the Colossians, in this context, to be much with him here; *ver.* 1. If ye are risen with Christ, and have derived a quickening virtue from him to work a divine life in you, let your affections ascend above, where Christ your life is.

Is not a man, whose very soul and life is wrapped up in honour and ambition, desirous ever to be near the court! His life flourishes under the sunshine of the prince's eye, and therefore he would fain dwell there. Does not the covetous wretch love to be near his hoards of gold or silver? He has put up his life in his bag, among his treasures, and he is not willing to be far distant, nor long separated from them. Whatever a man lives upon, he would willingly be ever near it, that so he may have the pleasure of feeding upon what is his greatest delight, and be refreshed and

nourished by that which he feels to support him. Now, what honour is to the ambitious, what money is to the covetous, what all the various delights of sense are to the men of carnal pleasure; that is God to the saint, that is Christ Jesus to the christian; and therefore he is ever desirous of such further manifestations of God and Christ, that may invigorate his spiritual life, and give him the pleasing relish of living. Then a man feels that he lives, when he is near to the spring of his life, and derives fresh supplies from it every moment.

Thence it is, that in every distress or danger, the saints fly to God for refuge and relief: He is their great *hiding place;* Ps. xxxii. 7. And Christ Jesus is represented in prophecy under the same character; *Is.* xxxii. 2. This man, in whom the *Godhead dwells bodily*, shall be a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest. The name of God in Christ, *is a strong tower; the righteous run into it*, to hide themselves, *and are safe;* Prov. xviii. 10. Their life is in God, in the keeping of Christ, and they can defy deaths and dangers, when their faith is strong, and their thoughts are fixed above.

They know the meaning of that tender and divine language; *Is.* xxvi. 20. *Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee; hide thyself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation be over-past.* In a time of public terror, and spreading desolation, they retire to their secret places of converse with God, and are secured, at least from the terror, if not from the destruction too. When the arrows of death fly thick around them by day, and the pestilence walks through the streets in darkness, when a thousand fall at their side, and ten thousand at their right-hand, they make the Lord their refuge, even the Most High their habitation, and dwelt at ease in his secret place. He covers them from evil, or he gives them courage, so that they are not afraid: They place themselves under the protection of his name; they find shelter in his attributes: These are their secret chambers; they hide within the curtains of his covenant, they wrap their souls, as it were, in a sheet, or rather in* a volume of promises; that ancient volume that has secured the saints in all ages; and though death be near them, they know that their better life is safe: He gives his angels charge over them, to keep them on earth, or to bear them up to heaven, where their life is; *Ps.* xci. 11, 12.

Thence it comes to pass that we see christians, searching after God in ordinances, and seeking for the Lord Jesus Christ in sermons, in prayers, in the closet, and in the sanctuary; for they live upon him. A holy soul pursues after the presence of his

The bible, of old, was written on several sheets of parchment tacked together, and rolled up in a volume.

God, and his Saviour, with the same zeal of affection and fervent desire, that the men of this world indulge in their pursuit of created good: *My soul followeth hard after thee;* Ps. lxiii. 8. Carnal persons are contented to be absent from God, for he is not their life: They can satisfy themselves with a shew of religion, without the power of it; and with empty forms of ordinances, without Christ in them, because they are not born again, their life is not spiritual. The sinner lives upon visible creatures, and these awaken his warmest affections. A saint lives upon hidden and invisible things, upon the hopes of futurity, and upon the glories that are concealed in the promises: He lives upon the righteousness and the intercession of Jesus his Mediator, upon the strength and grace of Christ, who is his head in heaven; upon the word, the promise, and the all-sufficiency of a God; and therefore these are objects of his meditation and his desire.

I proceed now to the three inferences for our consolation.

1st Consolation. If our life be hidden with God, and our Lord Jesus Christ, then it is in safe hands. The wisdom and mercy of God have joined together, to appoint, shall I say, such a secret repository for our spiritual life, that it might be for ever secure. What can we have, or what can we desire more for the safety of our best life, than that God himself should undertake to reserve it in himself for us, and appoint his own eternal Son, in our nature, to be the great Trustee and Surety, for his exhibition of it in every proper season?

Our original life was hid in the first Adam; it was intrusted with man, poor, feeble, inconstant man, and he lost it: He was of *the earth, earthy*, and our life with him goes down to the dust. Our new life is intrusted with Christ; it is hidden in God, who is almighty and unchangeable; and therefore it can never be lost. The second Adam is *the Lord from heaven*, a quickening Spirit; 1 *Cor.* xv. 45, &c. And *he that believeth on him, though he were dead in* nature, *yet shall he live* by grace, for *Christ is the resurrection and the life:* And if he be once made spiritually alive by Christ, he shall live for ever. This is the language of Christ himself; *John* xi. 25, 26.

What an unreasonable thing is it then for a christian to fear what men or devils can do against him, for they cannot hurt his best life! It is above the reach of all the assaults of earth or hell. Our Lord Jesus teaches us not to be afraid of them who only can kill the body; for the soul is not in their reach; nor is it possible for them to prevent the body from partaking of its share, in the glorious life appointed for a christian at the great rising-day.

We see here upon what firm grounds the doctrine of a christian's perseverance is built; Christ is his life, *Jesus, the same*

yesterday, to-day, and for ever. The all-sufficient God, and his eternal Son, have undertaken for the security of it; *John* x. 28, 29, 30. *I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me, is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one.* God hath sworn by his holiness, that the seed of Christ shall endure for ever; *Ps.* lxxxix. 35, 36. and that his loving kindness shall not be utterly taken away from his own children: And our Lord Jesus Christ doth little less than swear to the perseverance of his disciples, when he says; *John* xiv. 19. *Because I live, ye shall live also:* for, as I live, is the oath of God.

Why art thou cast down, O believer, and why is thy soul disquieted within thee? Hope in God thy life, for thou shalt yet praise him, how many and great soever thine adversaries are, and how difficult soever thy path and duty may be, and how loud soever thy foes threaten thy destruction. There may be many things in thy travels through this world, that may hurt or hinder the growth of thy spiritual life, and may for a season interpose, as it were, between thee and thy God: but neither life, nor death, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, shall ever separate thee entirely from him, whose love is secured in Jesus Christ; *Rom.* viii. 38, 39. The disciples were much to blame, that they were overwhelmed with terror in the midst of the storm, while Jesus Christ was with them in the same ship; and ye should chide your own souls, when you feel yourselves under such unbelieving fears as our Lord Jesus Christ chid in his fearful followers: "O ye of little faith, wherefore did ye doubt?"

IId Consolation. What a comfortable thought must it be to a poor feeble christian, that God and Christ know all the state of his spiritual life? for it is hid with them. Though the life of a saint has a cloud upon it, though it is entirely hidden from men, and sometimes too much hidden from himself too, yet the Father and the Saviour know every circumstance of it, how low it is, how feeble, what daily obstacles it meets with, what hourly enemies assault it. Christ our Lord well knows when our life is in danger, and what are the necessary supplies.

This is very encouraging to a poor trembling believer, when he hardly knows how to address the throne of grace himself in such a manner, as to represent all his wants, and all his spiritual sorrows and difficulties to God in prayer; but our Lord Jesus Christ, who is a compassionate high-priest, who is our Head, and near a-kin to us his members, is perfectly acquainted with our state: And the christian, mourning under the decays of grace, can look up to Christ with hope, he can mingle new exercises of

faith and dependance, among his sighs and groans, and commit his case afresh to Jesus his Saviour, with a humble and a holy acquiescence in him. Christ himself, who is the believer's life, must know and will take care of all affairs which relate to his spiritual and eternal welfare.

It is a matter of sweet consolation too, when a humble christian, who walks carefully before God, is reproached by the world for a deceiver and a hypocrite, that he can appeal to God, with whom his life is hid, and say, "My record is on high; though my friends, or my enemies, may scorn or deride me, yet he knoweth the way that I take, and the secret exercises of my hidden life: He knows my longings and breathings of soul after him, and that nothing but his love can satisfy me: He knows my diligence and my holy labour to please him: He knows the wrestlings and the conflicts that I go through hourly, to maintain my close walking with my God: He knows that I live, though it is but a feeble life; and the charges of the world against me are false and malicious." It is with a relish of holy pleasure that the christian sometimes, in secret, appeals to our Lord Jesus Christ, as Peter did, and says, *Lord, thou who knowest all things, knowest that I love thee*, John xxi. 17.

IIId Consolation. It is a matter of unspeakable comfort to a christian, that the most terrible things to a sinner, are become the greatest blessings to a saint: And these are death and judgment. What can be more dreadful to those who know not God than those two words are; for they put an eternal end to all their present pleasures, and to all their hopes. But what greater happiness can a saint wish or hope for, than death and judgment will put him in possession of? The one carries his soul upward where his life is, that is, to God and Christ in heaven; the other brings his life down to earth, where his body is, for Christ shall then come to raise his dust from the grave.

I confess, I finished my former discourse on this text, with a meditation on death and judgment; how the gloom which hung around the saint in this life, is all dispelled at that blessed hour; and he who was unknown and despised among men, stands forth with honour amongst admiring angels: His hidden manner of life is for ever at an end. But in this discourse the secret and glorious springs of his life, *viz.* God and Christ, will naturally lead us to the same delightful meditations of futurity, as the hidden manner of it has done; and there is so rich a variety of new and transporting scenes and ideas attending that subject, that I have no need to tire you with unpleasing repetition, though I resume the glorious theme.

Let my consolations proceed then, and let the saints rejoice. At the moment of death, the soul may say, "Farewel, for

ever, sins and sorrows, and perplexities; farewel, temptations of the alluring, and the affrighting kind; neither the vanities, nor the terrors of this world, shall reach me any more; for I shall from this moment for ever dwell where my joy, my life is. All my springs are in God, and I shall be for ever with him."—And when the morning of the resurrection dawns upon the world, and the day of judgment appears, the body of a christian shall be called out of the dust, and shall bid farewel for ever to death and darkness; to disease and pain, to all the fruits of sin, and all the effects of the curse. Christ, who is the resurrection and the life, stands up a complete conqueror over all the powers of the grave: He bids the sacred dust, arise and live; the dust obeys, and revives; the whole saint appears exulting in life; the date of his immortality then begins, and his life shall run on to everlasting ages.

Methinks such lively views of death should incline us rather to desire to depart from the body, that we may dwell with Christ. Death is but a flight of the soul where its divine life is. Why should we make it a matter of fear then, to be absent from the body, if we are immediately present with the Lord! Methinks, under the influence of such meditations of the resurrection, faith should breathe, and long for the last appearance of Christ, and rejoice in the language of holy Job: *I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth*; Job xix. 25. A christian should send his hopes and his wishes forward to meet the chariot-wheels of our Lord Jesus the Judge; for the day of his appearance is but the display of our life, and the perfection of our blessedness. *When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall* we *also appear with him in glory;* Col. iii. 4. My thoughts kindle at the sound of that blessed promise, and I long to let contemplation loose on a theme so divinely glorious. If ever the pomp of language be indulged, and the magnificence of words, it must be to display this bright solemnity, this illustrious appearance, which outshines all the pomp of words, and the utmost magnificence of language. Come, my friends, let us meditate the sacred conformity of the saints to Christ, first, in their hidden, and then in their glorious life; as he was on earth, so are they; both hated of the world, both unknown in it. The disciples must be trained up for public honours, as their Master was, in this hideous and howling wilderness, in caves of darkness, or rather in a den of savages. They must follow the Captain of their salvation through a thousand dangers and sufferings; and they shall receive their crown too, and a glory like that which arrays their divine Leader.

O may I never think it hard to trace the footsteps of my Lord, though it be in a miry, or a thorny way! May I never repine

at poverty and meanness of circumstance in my present pilgrimage! nor think it strange if the world scorn and abuse me, or if Satan, the foul spirit, should assault and buffet me sorely! Dare I hope to appear in glory, when Christ, who is my life appears; and can I not bear to attend him in sufferings and shame? Am I better than my blessed Lord? What poor attendants had the Son of God, at his first entrance into our world! How mean was every thing that belonged to him on earth! What vile and despicable raiment, unworthy of the Prince of glory! What coarse provision, and sorry furniture, to entertain incarnate godhead! And how impious was the treatment he found among men, and impudent temptations from the same foul spirit! He had snares, sorrows, and temptations, watching all around him: The sorrows of death compassed him about, and the powers of darkness crouded him with their envious assaults; earth and hell were at once engaged against him; they hung him bleeding on a cursed and infamous tree, lifted on high to be made a more public gazing-stock, and an object of wider scorn! Blessed Saviour! how divine was thy patience to endure all these indignities, and not call for thy Father's legions, nor thy own thunder.

But, this was the hour of thy appointed combat, the place of thy voluntary obscurity, and the season of thy hidden life; and thy saints must bear thy resemblance in both worlds. How unspeakable were thy past sorrows! and thy present glories all unspeakable! How infinitely different were these dark and mournful scenes, from the joys and honours thou hast purchased by those very sufferings! Sacred honours and joys without alloy, which thou art now possessed of as their great forerunner, and hast made ready for thy subjects in thy own kingdom! What robes of light shall array thy followers in that day; What bright planet, or brighter star, shall be the place of thy dwelling? or shall all those shining worlds be mansions of various residence, as thou shalt lead thy saints successively through the vast and numerous provinces of thy boundless dominion? Sorrow, sin, and temptation, shall be named no more, unless to triumph over them in immortal songs. The fairest spirits of light, in their own heavenly forms, shall be the companions and attendants of the children of God. Jesus, the Lord of glory, is their king and head, the leader of their triumph, and the pattern of their exaltation. Jesus shall appear in his meridian lustre, as the Sun of Righteousness in the noon of heaven; yet the beams of his influence shall be gentle as the morning-star. There needs no other sun in that upper world; the Lamb is the light thereof. Jesus, the ornament of paradise, and the delight of God, shall be the eternal and beatific object of their senses, and their souls; they must be *where he is, to behold his glory.*

The blessed God shall dwell among them, and lay out upon them the riches of his own all-sufficiency, riches of wisdom, grace, and power, all-suprising, and all-infinite. Divine power shall then reveal all the glory that has been laid up for them, of old, in the purposes of God, or in the promises of the book of life. But it was fit it should be hidden there, while the time of their probation lasted; it was fit they should live by faith, and under some degrees of darkness, while the ages of sin and temptation were rolling away: It was divinely proper that eternal life should not break forth, nor the splendours of the third heaven be made too conspicuous, till the six thousand years of mortality and death had finished their revolutions round the lower skies, and had answered the scheme of divine counsel and judgment, on a world where sin had entered.

But life and heaven must not be hid for ever. The almighty word, in that day, shall bid the ancient decree bring forth, and the promise unfold itself in public light. What new worlds of unseen felicity! what scenes of delight, and celestial blessings, never yet revealed to the race of Adam! When the rivers of pleasure, that had run under ground from the earth's foundation, shall break up in immortal fountains.

Mercy and truth shall lavish out upon men with an unsparing hand all those treasures of life which were hid in God, and in the gospel for them. The All-wise shall please himself in making so noble creatures, out of so mean materials, dust and ashes. Glorified saints are master-pieces of divine skill; and the blessed original, or first exemplar of them, the man Jesus, is the perfection of the contrivance of God; here he has abounded in all wisdom and prudence. Then the inhabitants of upper worlds shall see an illustrious and holy creation, rising out of the ruins of this wretched globe, involved all in guilt, and weltering in penal fire. When this scene opens, what sounding acclamations shall echo from world to world, and new universal honours be paid to Divine wisdom! The morning-stars shall sing together again, and those holy armies shout for joy. The grace of God descending to earth, in days past, had in some measure prepared his children for glory: But in that day he shall enlarge their capacities, both of sense and of mind, to an inconceivable extent, and shall fill the powers of their glorified nature with the fruits of his love, new and old.

And what if the limits of our capacity shall be for ever stretching themselves on all sides, and for ever drinking in larger measures of glory; What an astonishing state of ever-growing pleasure! What an eternal advance of our heaven! The godhead is an infinite ocean of life and blessedness, and finite vessels may be for ever swelling, and for ever filling in that sea of all-

:y. There must be no tiresome satiety in that ever-
ntertainment. God shall create the joys of his saints
ıh: He shall throw open his endless stores of blessing,
ı even to the first rank of angels; and feast the sons
ıghters of men with pleasures a-kin to those which
·epared for the Son of God. For verily he took not
n the nature of angels, but the likeness of sinful flesh:
en he shall appear the second time without sin to our
ı, we shall then be made like him, for we shall see him
Amen.

HYMN FOR SERMONS IX. and X.

The Hidden Life of a Christian.

ıoul, that lives on high,
ıen lie grovelling here!
are fix'd above the sky,
ıh forbids his fear.

ience knows no secret stings;
grace and joy combine
ı life, whose holy springs
den and divine.

in secret on his God;
l in secret sees:
be all in arms abroad,
lls in heavenly peace.

His pleasures rise from things unseen,
Beyond this world and time,
Where neither eyes nor ears have been,
Nor thoughts of mortals climb.

He wants no pomp, nor royal throne
To raise his figure here;
Content, and pleased to live unknown,
Till Christ his life appear.

He looks to heaven's eternal hills,
To meet that glorious day;
Dear Lord, how slow thy chariot-wheels!
How long is thy delay!

SERMON XI.

Nearness to God the Felicity of Creatures.

PSALM lxv. 4.—Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts.

THE FIRST PART.

IT was an elegant address that the queen of Sheba made to Solomon, when she had surveyed the magnificence of his court, and heard his wisdom; "Happy are thy men, and happy are these thy servants, who stand continually before thee!" 1 *Kings* x. 8. And there was much truth and honour in her speech. But the harp of David strikes a diviner note; Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, O God, that he may approach unto thee, and dwell in thy courts, in the holy sanctuary.

Whether, in these words, the Psalmist blesses those levites and priests, whose duty it was to attend the ark, and to dwell near the tabernacle, or whether he pronounces blessedness on every man of Israel, whose habitation nigh the ark gave him frequent opportunities to attend at that solemn worship, is not very necessary to determine. Either of these may be called dwelling in the courts of God. But it is most probable, that the sacred writer designs the second sense of the word, and that he includes himself in the desire or possession of this blessedness, though he was neither a priest nor a levite; for he uses the same phrase in several places, and applies it to himself; Ps. xxvii. 4. *One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.* Ps. xxiii. 6.—*I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.* By which he intimates, that he would seek the most frequent opportunities of approaching God in public worship.

It is sufficient to my present purpose, that the holy Psalmist makes the *blessedness of man* to depend upon his *near approaches to God.*

Here we should remember that God is necessarily near to all his creatures, by his infinite knowledge, by his preserving and governing power: *He is not far from every one of us: for in him we live, and move, and have our being*; Acts xvii. 27, 28. But the privilege which David speaks of in my text, is a *peculiar approach of a creature to God,* which is a fruit of divine choice

and favour. The souls who enjoy this blessing are chosen to it, and by divine providence and mercy are *caused to approach him*. What further explication of this phrase is necessary, will be sufficiently given in the following parts of the discourse.

Let this then be the doctrine which I shall attempt to confirm and improve, *viz.*

Doctrine. Nearness to God is the foundation of a creature's happiness.

This may be proved with ease, if we consider, what it is that makes an intelligent being happy: and how well such an approach to God furnishes us with all the means of attaining it. The ingredients of happiness are these three: 1. The contemplation of the most excellent object: 2. The love of the chiefest good: 3. And a delightful sense of being beloved by an all-sufficient power, or an almighty friend.

1. The contemplation of the most excellent object. And he who is nearest to God, has the fairest advantages of this kind. The understanding is a noble faculty of our natures; truth is its proper food; and truth, in all the boundless varieties and beauties of it, is the object of its pursuit, when it is refined from sensualities.

This is the delight of the *philosopher*, to search all the hidden wonders of nature, and pursue truth with a most pleasurable and restless fatigue: For this he climbs the heavens, traces the planetary and the starry worlds: For this he pries into the bowels of the earth, and sounds the depths of the ocean; and when, with immense toil of mind, he has found out some unknown natural truth, how are all the powers of his soul charmed within him, and he exults, as it were, in a little paradise!

But the souls who are admitted to draw nearest to God, contemplate infinite truth in its original. They converse with that divine artificer, who spread abroad these curtains of heaven, who moulded this globe of earth, and furnished the upper and the lower worlds with all their admirable varieties. He is a God of glory and beauty in himself, as well as the author of all the beauties of nature. All his perfections, as well as his works, yield heavenly matter for contemplation: He eminently contains in himself all the amazing scenes of nature, and the more transporting wonders of the world of grace; those mysteries wherein *he has abounded in all wisdom and prudence*: How the ruined sons of Adam were rescued from death, by the Son of God dying in their stead; how Satan was baffled in his most subtle designs, and the deepest policies of hell undermined, when the prince of

darkness destroyed his own kingdom, by persuding men to put the Son of God to death.

What a divine pleasure is it to converse with that wisdom which laid the eternal scheme of all these wonders, and of ten thousand more unknown beauties in the transactions of providence and grace, with which the blessed minds above are feasted to satisfaction! And besides all these God has reserved in himself a hidden world of new scenes to open hereafter, and an everlasting profusion of new wonders to display before the eyes of his favourites. Heaven is described by *seeing God*, by *beholding him face to face*, and by *knowing* him in the way and manner in which *we are known*; 1 Cor. xiii. 12. And he is pleased to indulge some taste of this felicity to his children in this life, by mediums and glasses, by types and figures, by his word and ordinances, under the enlightening beams of his spirit. This is the *beauty of the Lord*, for the view of which David desired to *dwell in* the sanctuary; *Ps.* xxvii. 4. that he might see the power and glory of God continually, as he had sometimes seen it there: that he might behold his beauty, and talk of his glorious goodness in his holy temple. O *how great is his goodness! and how great is his beauty*; Zech. ix. 17.

But contemplation alone cannot make a creature happy: This only entertains the understanding, which is but one faculty of our natures: the will and affections must have their proper entertainment too. Their beatific exercise may be comprized in the word love, either in the outgoings or the returns of it:

most exalted love. But for me to know, and to love the best of beings, cannot make me completely happy, unless I am *beloved* of him also, and unless I *feel* that he loves me. Happiness requires mutual love.

III. The third ingredient therefore of our felicity, and that which perfects the blessedness of a creature, is, the delightful sense of the love of an almighty friend. To know, to love, and to be beloved by such a being, must complete our bliss; one who hath all beauty, and all goodness in himself; one who can free us from every pain, secure us against every peril, and confer upon us every pleasure. This is the perfection of our heaven, when all these are enjoyed in a perfect degree, without any alloy. Now such is the state of those who *are chosen and caused to approach unto God*, so as to know him, and love him; that they have the chiefest advantages to obtain the assurance and taste of his love. The man whom the Psalmist pronounces blessed in my text, hopes for this pleasure in *the house of God*, that he shall be *satisfied with the* divine *goodness* there.

The *loving-kindness* of God is life, or something *better than life*; Ps. lxiii. 3. and to have a sensation of this loving-kindness, is to feel that I live. To think, to know, and to be assured that I am beloved, by an all-sufficient power, *who can do more* for me *than I can ask or think*, in life, and death, and in eternity, and to have pleasing and spiritual sensations of *this shed abroad in the heart*; this raises the christian near to the upper heaven, while he dwells on earth, and he *rejoices with joy unspeakable, and full of glory*.

Some may object here and say, Is it no part of our blessedness then to love the saints, to rejoice in their love, to contemplate the works of God, and his wonders in creation and providence? Answer, Yes surely; and we have allowed it before: But when we take true satisfaction in any of these, it is as they proceed from God, as they relate to God, and lead our souls to centre in him; for God, who is the first cause, must be the last end of all, and no creatures, as divided from him, can make us either holy or happy.

I proceed to make some improvement of the few thoughts I have delivered on this subject.

I. My first reflection should be upon the scale of blessedness, or the several degrees of felicity that creatures are possessed of, according to their advancing approaches toward God: But my meditations dilate themselves here to so large an extent, as makes it necessary to adjourn this thought to the next discourse. I proceed therefore to the

II. Reflection, What unknown evil is contained in the nature of every sin, for it divides the creature from God and from

happiness? It may be said to every soul on earth, as it was once said to Israel; *Your iniquities have separated between you and your God;* Is. lix. 2. What a world of endless mischief was comprized in the first sin of Adam, whereby this lower creation was, as it were, cut off from God at once? Man was at first happy in the image and love of his Maker, a-kin to him by nature and creation, as a son to a father: Adam was *the Son of God;* Luke iii. 38. and he enjoyed the privilege and the pleasure of holy nearness to God, and humble converse with him. He read the name of his Maker in all his works; he could contemplate divine wisdom, power, and goodness there; he loved his Creator with all his soul, and was happy in his Creator's love. But when sin entered, Adam fled from his heavenly Father, and his friend; *he hid himself among the trees in the garden,* when the voice of the Lord called after him, *Adam, where art thou?* And it has been the dismal description of sinners ever since, that they are *afar off from God.*

O what tongue can express, or what heart can conceive, the immense load, and everlasting train of mischiefs and miseries, that lie heavy on poor mankind, and have pursued human nature, in all the infinite members and branches of it, through all ages and nations, for almost six thousand years? All these were introduced by man's first disobedience. We are a sinful race of creatures, born in the likeness of the original sinner; We come into the world *estranged from God, and go astray from the womb;* for we were *shapen* in iniquity, and conceived in sin; *Ps.* lviii. 3. and li. 5. It is the temper and spirit of mankind, by nature, to desire an absence from God, and to wish their own misery; Job xxi. 14. "What is the Almighty that we should serve him? "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." By nature we love him not, nor do we seek after his love. This is your state, and this mine by nature: These are our hateful and deplorable circumstances, and yet we go on to aggravate our own guilt, to run further from God hourly, and make haste to everlasting wretchedness, if divine grace prevent us not.

III. Reflection. Is nearness to God the foundation of the creature's felicity, then how vain are all pretences to happiness while man is a stranger to God? Let him be surrounded with all imaginable delights of sense, or let him be furnished with all advantages of reason or natural knowledge, to entertain the mind; yet if he be afar off from God, he must be afar off from blessedness. *Without God, and without hope,* is the character of the sinful world. Do the profane and sensual wretches boast of their pleasures, while God is not in all their thoughts? Empty shews of pleasure, and vain shadows! And even these shadows, these

vain flatteries, are ever flying from their embraces; they delude their pursuit in this world, and shall vanish all at once at the moment of death, and leave them in everlasting sorrow.

Let the sensualist *sport himself in his own deceivings*, and bless himself in the midst of his madness: Let the rich worldling say, "Soul take thine ease, for thy barns and thy chests are full." Let the mere philosopher glory that he has found happiness out; let him busy himself in refined subtilties, and swell in the pride of his reason: let all these pretenders to felicity, compliment each other, if they please, or call themselves the only happy men; yet the meanest, and the weakest of all the saints, would not make an exchange with them; for the saint is brought nigh to God: And though his poverty here be never so great and his understanding never so contemptible, yet he knows this great truth well, that to exchange God for the creature, would be infinite loss, and misery unspeakable. They who never drew near to God, who never saw God in his works or his word, so as to love him above all things, and partake of his love, must be miserable in spite of all their pretences: *They that are far from God shall perish*; Ps. lxxiii. 27.

IV. Reflection. God has not utterly abandoned this world to sin and misery, while he keeps his word and his ordinances in it: For these are his appointed means of approaching to him, and steps whereby we may climb to the blessedness of saints and angels. God sent his word after Adam the sinner, when he fled from him in paradise, that he might recal man back to himself; and he has been ever since sending messages of peace, and invitations of love, to a ruined and rebellious world. Happy sinners, who hear the voice of an inviting God, who turn their back upon the perishing vanities of life and time, who forsake the creatures, and return to their Creator again! Thousands of the sons and daughters of Adam have accepted the messages of this grace, and have been by these methods trained up for glory: By conversing with God in his ordinances, and dwelling in his courts on earth, they have been happily prepared for an everlasting habitation in his court of heaven. We this day are favoured with the same divine call in the gospel; let every soul of us rejoice and follow.

V. Reflection. The true value of things on earth may be judged of and determined by their tendency to bring us near to God and heaven. The common measure of our esteem of things, is the influence they have to promote what we think our happiness. Now, if our judgment be set right in this point, and we are convinced that an approach to God is the way to be happy,

then whatsoever leads us nearest to God will rise in value in our esteem.

Then our hearts will set a high esteem on those friends or relatives who draw us to the knowledge and love of God: Then we shall prize the ministrations of the gospel in England above the riches of both the Indies; then we shall not think the ministry of the word a mean and contemptible employment, nor delight to hear scandals thrown on the persons or the characters of those who are engaged in it; for *these are the servants of the living God, who shew us the way* to be happy. Then we shall commend those sermons, and those writings most, not that have most wit and fancy in them, but those which we feel and find to draw our hearts farthest off from sin and the creature, and bring them nearest to God; and then, if there were but one bible in the world, we should all agree to say, that there is not treasure enough in all the material creation to purchase it out of our hands.

VI. Reflection. All the means of separation from God should be numbered among the instruments of real misery.

Does Satan the fallen angel, solicit our youth with his flatteries; that it is time enough to mind religion yet; let us have a few more gaudy days first? Does he frighten the aged sinner with terrible falsehoods, and tempt him to an utter despair of grace? Let his wicked suggestions be renounced with disdain, and let him never prevail to keep one soul of us at a distance from God; for his first business was to divide us from God, and to ruin our happiness: And it is his daily employment to hold us fast in the chains of iniquity and death, and thus to prevent our return to God.

Does the flesh allure us to pursue sinful delights? Does it awaken and charm our imagination with the flowery and fatal scenes of luxury and mirth? Do the lusts of the flesh, or the lusts of the eye, persuade us to seek happiness among them? And tempt us, at least for the present, to lay aside the thoughts of God? Let us set a strict guard upon ourselves, and watch all the avenues of sense and appetite, lest we be drawn off from the practice of piety, and the service, and the love of God, where true happiness is only to be found.

Do you find, O christians, that the world begins to creep into your hearts? Do you find any creature sit too near your souls, and take up any of that time and room which God should have there? Awake, betimes, and bestir yourselves, lest it divide you from your happiness. When you feel your spirits at any time grow cold in religious worship, when you can pass a day with an indifference about secret converse with God, and be content to

be long absent from him, search with diligence what enemy it is that has crept in secretly, and interposes betwixt God and you; and when you have found it, never rest, till by the aids of divine grace, you have removed the idol from your thoughts, and your soul be restored to its holy nearness to God again. I might say in general, concerning all this world, keep your hearts aloof from it, while your hands, and perhaps your heads too, are engaged in the necessary affairs of it. The nearer your souls are to the creatures, the farther they depart from God and blessedness. As a natural consequence from this thought, we may raise a

VII. Reflection. Wanderings, and vain thoughts in the time of religious worship, are, and will be, the great burdens of a child of God; for they clog him, and keep him down when he would rise to his heavenly Father; they are bars in his way to blessedness, for they hinder his approach to God. But what wretched creatures are we, if we indulge vain thoughts, and worldly images and idols in the house of God, without complaint, and without mourning! What holy shame and repentance should it work in us, to think, that even in the place where the great and blessed God comes to shew his face, we should be building up walls and partitions to hide his face from us! that we should turn away our faces from him in the hour when he comes on purpose to meet us!

I might add, as a concluding reflection, that it is a tiresome bondage to a saint, in a devout frame, to dwell so long in this body of flesh and blood. This mortal state prevents our complete happiness every hour that we tarry in it. While we sojourn in this tabernacle, we are so much the farther from God; while *we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord*; 2 Cor. v. 6. This mortal flesh is a painful veil to the lively christian, for it divides him from the sight and full enjoyment of his chosen blessedness. At the best we see God but *darkly through a glass* while we dwell here; the moment of release places us in the region of spirits, *where we shall see him face to face*; 1. Cor. xiii. 12. Though all these reflections may afford us many useful rules for our practice, yet I will not finish the discourse without a few inferences which are more expressly practical.

Practical Directions.—1. Give all glory to God for ever, who brings himself so near to us: He puts us thus far in the road to happiness, when he builds his houses amongst us, when he approaches to us in his holy ordinances, when he calls, and causes us to approach to him, and gives us kind and sure promises of eternal blessedness above in his immediate presence. Let each of us join with Solomon in that noble piece of worship; 1 Kings viii. 27. "But will God indeed dwell on earth? Behold,

the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee, how much less any house that is built for thee?" Yet the Lord is near to the churches of his saints, when they worship him; *he is near to all that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth*; Ps. cxlv. 18. And *his word is near us*, even in our hands, and on our lips; that word which teaches us the way to approach God, and ensures the blessedness.

O give glory to God, the great and holy God, that he should ever be willing to let sinners approach him; that the Majesty of Heaven, and the supreme Lord of all, who had been highly provoked by his rebellious creatures, should ever come into terms of reconciliation; that he himself should provide a reconciling sacrifice, to satisfy his own governing justice, and a reconciling spirit to reduce the rebel man to his obedience and love. This divine condescension, O my soul, demands thy wonder and thy worship.

2. Adore the mystery of the incarnation, and bless God incarnate; for this is the ground of all our habitual nearness to God, and all our actual approaches to him and heaven. It was the Son of God, who is one with the Father, that stooped down, and approached to our nature, and took a part of it into union with himself, that we might approach to the Deity: No man cometh to the Father but by the Son; John xiv. 6. For ever had we, the wretched offspring of Eve, been banished from the courts, and the presence of God, had not this man Jesus the Son of Man been caused first to draw near, and to dwell near; and blessed be his name for ever.

We rejoice with all the powers of our souls, to think how near to God the man Jesus is, for since he approaches the throne we shall approach too; Rev. iii. 21. We shall be blessed through his blessedness; Gal. iii. 8. 14. He was first chosen to draw near, and *we chosen in him*; Eph. i. 4. Nearness to God is still a matter of divine choice and distinction: He approaches to God above, accepted in his own spotless righteousness, and we in him He is in a more transcendant manner one with God, and we must be united to God by him, and so made somewhat like him John xvii. 24. When our Mediator approaches to the Father in worship, he, as our High-priest, bears the name of the whole church in heaven and earth, on his breast, and on his shoulders; Ex. xxxviii. 12—29. In his beauty of holiness, we unholy creatures are presented before God, and caused to approach with glorious acceptance.

Stand still here, O ye saints of the Most High, and survey your privileges and your honours; and remember that whensoever you draw near to God in the courts of his house, it was Jesus who drew near first, it is Jesus who still dwells near to make you

ceptable : it is he who maintains the nearness of your state, and ur peace with God, by ever presenting your natures in his rson : *He appears in the presence of God for us*; Heb. ix. 24. is Jesus, who, by his Spirit, lifts you up near to the Father; d it is by his best beloved and nearest Son, that God the ather draws near to all his children.

3. Be not found amongst the mockers of approach to God, d holy converse with him in worship. They despise felicity elf. Such there have been of old, and such there are in our ays; and because they are afar off from God themselves, they ny all nearness to him, they ridicule our approaches to God, as e vain effects of a wild imagination, and the mere sensible comotions of a warm fancy.

But is it not a very rational and intelligible thing, for a soul public worship, so to draw near to God, as to learn more of m, and to know more of his perfections and graces than he ew before? May not such a worshipper have his love to God ised and warmed by such advancing knowledge! And may not arise, by holy inferences, to a livelier and surer hope that is beloved of God too, and solace himself in this assurance? That is there in all this which is not perfectly agreeable reason, or that should provoke an impious jest? But let ich have a care, lest they blaspheme God and his Spirit; t them take heed, lest they be thrust down to hell, and set at a readful distance from God, without remedy, who deride the joy heaven.

4. Take heed of those deceits of being above ordinances, lest ou lose true happiness through pride and vain conceit. Abanon the vain fancy of living nearer to God in the neglect of em. God is glorious in himself, but he has appointed orinances, as means whereby we may approach and see him. ome stars, though large in themselves, yet are not visible ithout glasses; and others that are visible to the naked eye, et appear much fairer and larger by this help. Even so those lories of God, which are unknown to reason, and to the light of ature, are discovered in the ministrations of his word; such are is subsistence in three persons, and his forgiving grace: and hose glories of his nature, which are traced out by human reason, tand in a diviner light, with all their splendors about them, in he gospel, and the sanctuary.

5. Never rest satisfied without approaching to God in spirit and in truth, when you attend on his ordinances. This is the goodness of his house that must satisfy the holy soul of the Psalmist, as he expresses it in the following words of my text: *We shall be satisfied with the goodness of thine house.*

What a folly it is to be pleased with empty ordinances without God! 1 Tim. iv. 8. *Bodily exercise profiteth little.* To make a serious matter of mere external things, and to make nothing of spiritual ones! These formal and silly creatures come to the palace of the king, and turn their backs on his person, to play with his shadow upon the wall: ridiculous and childish folly! And yet how often is this the trifling practice of the men of wisdom? And sometimes persons of true piety are tempted to indulge in it. Let me ask my conscience, "Did I never let my curiosity dwell upon the just reasoning, the correct style, the pretty similies, the flowing oratory, or flowery beauties of a sermon, while I neglected to seek my God there, and to raise my soul near him? Or perhaps I was charmed with the decency and voice of the preacher; or, it may be, was better entertained with some zealous party flights which flattered my own bitter zeal, and seemed to sanctify my uncharitable censures; and when I returned from the place of worship, I had a pleasant remembrance of all these," But it had been better, if conscience had reproached my folly, and made me remember that I had forgot my God there.

It is also a dreadful abuse of gospel-ordinances, and a high mockery of God, to come to his courts, and not draw near him; Jer. xii. 2. "When God is near in our mouth, but far from our heart." Ordinances are an appointed medium for man to come to God by them. If we use them not as such, we either make idols of them, by placing of them in God's stead, or we make nothing of them, no means of converse with God: both ways we nullify them, for an idol is nothing, and mere vanity, as the prophets and the apostles speak: So ordinances are vain and unprofitable, and utterly insufficient to make us happy without God. They are mere images, and shadows without the substance.

To seek after God, and endeavour to approach him in all his own institutions, is the way to be recovered from the miseries of the fall. To live in a holy nearness to God, is a restoration to the pleasures of innocency. It is the full happiness of reasonable natures to be always with God: It is our noblest honour, and our sweetest consolation, in this state of darknes and trial, to get as near him as earth and grace will admit; and it is also the best preparative for heaven and the state of glory, where we shall dwell for ever near him, and be for ever blessed. *Amen.*

HYMN FOR SERMON XI.

Nearness to God the Felicity of Creatures.

ARE those the happy persons here,
Who dwell the nearest to their God,
Has God invited sinners near?
And Jesus bought his grace with blood?

Go then, my soul, address the Son,
To lead thee near the Father's face;
Gaze on his glories yet unknown,
And taste the blessings of his grace.

Vain vexing world, and flesh, and sense,
Retire while I approach my God;
Nor let my sins divide me thence,
Nor creatures tempt my thoughts abroad.

While to thine arms, my God, I press,
No mortal hope, nor joy, nor fear,
Shall call my soul from thine embrace;
'Tis heav'n to dwell for ever there.

SERMON XII.

The Scale of Blessedness: Or, Blessed Saints, Blessed Saviour, and Blessed Trinity.

PSALM LXV. 4.—Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts.

THE SECOND PART.

BY the entrance of sin into the world, man was first separated from God and happiness: God in righteous anger withdrew from his creature man; and man, obeying the dictates of his own impious folly, runs farther away from his Maker God; *He is born like a wild ass's colt*, unknowing and thoughtless: and like a colt he runs wild in the forest of this world, roving amongst a thousand vanities in quest of happiness, but afar off from God still. He seeks substantial and pleasant food, but he meets with broad barren sands in the wilderness, or with brakes, and briars, and bitter weeds. He follows every foolish fire of fancy, till he is led into many a pit and precipice; He rises again, and changes the chase: He flies perpetually from object to object, but finds everlasting disappointment: Shadows, and painted hopes, flatter and tire, and delude him, till he lies down and despairs in death.

This is the case of mankind by nature; they live ignorant of God, and wilfully blind to their own felicity. Fatal blindness and wretched mankind! But blessed be God, that he has not renounced and abandoned all our race for ever, and fixed us in a state of eternal separation from him! Blessed be God, who has chosen, and already called many of the wanderers to himself again! He has built dwellings for himself on earth; he has appointed means for our return, and invites all to approach him. Good David had a full and lively sense hereof when he wrote the words of this song; *Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts.* Whence I derived this doctrine in the foregoing sermon.

Doctrine. Nearness to God is the foundation of a creature's happiness.

This doctrine appeared in full evidence, while we considered the three chief ingredients of true felicity, *viz.* the contemplation of the noblest object, to satisfy all the powers of the understanding, the love of the supreme good, to answer the utmost propen-

sities of the will; and the sweet and everlasting sensation and assurance of the love of an almighty friend, who will free us from all the evils which our nature can fear, and confer upon us all the good which a wise and innocent creature can desire. Thus all the capacities of man are employed in their highest and sweetest exercises and enjoyments. Now it is God alone, the great and ever-blessed God, who can furnish us with all these materials of blessedness, who can refine our natures, and who can thus engage and entertain all the powers and appetites of our natures refined.

Having finished what I designed in the explication and proof of this doctrine, I proceeded to make various reflections for our information and practice. But the meditation which I proposed, and reserved for this discourse, was the sacred scale of blessedness, or the several degrees of felicity, that creatures are possessed of, according to their advancing approaches toward God; and we shall find blessedness, in its highest perfection, to belong only to God himself.

First degree of blessedness.—I. Happy are they who, though they are sinners by nature, yet are brought so near to God, as to be within the sound and call of his grace.

In this sense the whole nation of the Jews was a people near unto God, for he shewed his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel; and upon this account they were happy, in ancient ages, above all kingdoms of the earth; *Ps.* cxlvii. and cxlviii.

Happy those countries where the apostles of Christ planted the gospel, and brought grace and salvation near them, though they were before at a dreadful distance from God! Happy Britons in our age! Though we are involved, with the rest of mankind, in the common ruins of our first defection from God, yet we are not left in the darkness of heathenism, on the very confines of hell: But God has exalted us near to heaven and himself, in the ministrations of his word, and led us in a way to his everlasting enjoyment. He has built his sanctuaries amongst us, and established his churches in the midst of us. We are invited to behold *the beauty of the Lord*, to return to our obedience and his love, and thus be made happy for ever.

This is a matter of divine choice and peculiar favour. Blessed England, whom "He hath chosen, and caused to approach" thus far towards himself! And why was not the polite nation of China chosen too; And why not the poor Savages of Africa, and the barbarous millions of the American world? Why are they left in a dismal estrangement from God, "Even so, Father, because it pleased thee," whose counsels "are unsearchable, and whose ways of judgment and mercy are past finding out."

"Blessed are the people who hear and know the joyful

sound;" Ps. lxxxix. 15. But there are degrees of this blessedness, even in the lands which enjoy the gospel. Blessed are they above others, who dwell near to the places of public worship, who sit under an enlightening, a powerful and persuasive ministry, who have opportunity to hear the word of God often, and who have skill to read it. Blessed are they who are born of religious parents, and trained up in the early forms of piety; these are still brought near unto God; they are nursed up, as it were, in his churches, and dwell in his courts. And blessed are those who are devoted to the service of the sanctuary, like the priests and levites of old, who were brought nearest to God, among all Israel; for their civil employment, as well as their religious duty, led them continually toward God, heaven and happiness. But all these glorious privileges are not sufficient to ensure eternal felicity, unless we come one step farther in approaching to God.

Second degree of blessedness—II. Happy are those souls who have been taught to improve their outward advantages of nearness to God, so as to obtain reconciliation, with him by the blood of Christ. This is the great end of all the privileges before-mentioned, which either Jew or Gentile were partakers of: This was the design of all the approaches that God made towards them. Peace and salvation, were preached *to those which were afar off, and to them that were nigh*, and Christ died to reconcile both unto God; and that *through him both might have an access by one Spirit unto the Father:* Eph. ii. 16, 17, 18. Why are all the alluring glories of the Lord displayed before us, in his gospel, but that we might be drawn to love him? Why are these wondrous manifestations of his grace made to us, but that we might become the objects of his love, and taste of his special goodness.

Happy persons, who are weary of their old estrangement from God, who have heard and have received the offers of his mercy, who have made their solemn approaches to God by Jesus the Mediator, and are joined to the Lord in a sweet and everlasting covenant! Happy creatures, who behold the beauties of their Maker's face with double pleasure, who love him with all their souls, and begin to taste the love of his heart too! This is a matter of special privilege. *Blessed are the men who are thus chosen* by divine grace, and whom he *has caused to approach to himself* by the converting power of his own Spirit! Let them come, let them come, and give up their names to his churches; let them take up their places, and dwell in his courts on earth, and thus make a nearer approach to his court of heaven.

O that sinners would once be convinced that there are divine pleasures in religion, and *joys which the stranger intermeddles not with!* O that they would be once brought to believe, that happi-

ness consists in approaching to God! That they would but give credit to the report of wise and holy men, who have lived in humble converse with God many years! What a sacred and superior pleasure it is, above all the joys of sense, to love the great and blessed God, and to know that he loves me! To walk all the day in the light of his countenance! To have him near me as a counsellor, whose advice I may ask in every difficulty of life! To be ever near him as my guard, and to fly from every danger to the wing of his protection! To have such an almighty Friend with me in sickness and sorrow, in anguish and mortal agonies, and ready to receive my departing spirit into the arms of his love.

O that the formal and nominal christian, who attends divine worship, would but once be persuaded, that if he come one step nearer to God, his happiness will receive almost an infinite advance! Let the shadows lead him to the substance; let the image in the glass allure him to converse with the original beauty, and the ordinances of grace bring him near to the God of grace! Let him no longer content himself with pictures of happiness, but give himself up entirely to the Lord, and be made possessor of solid and substantial felicity. Blessed is the man who has renounced sin and the world, and his heart is over-powered by divine goodness, and brought near to God in his holy covenant.

Yet there are degrees of blessedness among the saints on earth. Blessed is every soul whose state and nature are changed, who is not a stranger, but a son: but more blessed are those sons who are most like their heavenly Father, and keep closest to him in all their ways! Blessed are they above others in the holy family, who seldom wander from their God, whose hearts are always in a heavenly frame, and whose graces and virtues brighten and improve daily, and make a continual and joyful advance toward the state of glory!

Third degree of blessedness.—III. Now let us raise our thoughts, and wonder at the blessedness of the saints and angels in the upper world: and blessed are those spirits, whether they belong to bodies or not, whom the Lord has chosen, and caused to approach so near him, as to dwell and abide in his higher courts! They are fully *satisfied with the goodness of his house, even of his holy temple.* The saints are established as pillars in this temple of God, and shall go no more out. They approach him in their sublime methods of worship, without the medium of types and ordinances: They *see God face to face;* 1 Cor. xiii. 12. Though ordinances in the church on earth are means of drawing near, yet in that very thing they are also tokens of some degree of estrangement. The saints above are constantly *before the throne,* or night and day serving the Lord, as it is expressed

metaphorically; *Rev.* vii. 15. though in truth *there is no night there;* for they who dwell with God, dwell in light everlasting: They approach to their Maker in most pleasurable acts of worship, without any interposing cloud to hide his face from them, without clogs and fetters to hold them at a distance, without wanderings, without sins, and without temptations.

O blessed state! O glorious felicity! They behold the beauty of the Lord, transported in divine contemplation, infinitely various and immortal. They feed upon his goodness with all the raptures of refined love, and are held in long ecstacy under the permanent sensations of the love of God.

Yet in this state of perfect glory, there are doubtless some different degrees of nearness to God, and consequently there are different ranks and orders of blessed spirits. This is evident amongst the angels beyond all contradiction: for though all of them behold the face of God continually; *Mat.* xviii. 10. yet Gabriel seems to be a favourite angel, standing in the presence of God, and employed in the noblest errands to men; *Luke* i. 19. And we read of seraphs and cherubs, angels and archangels, thrones, dominions, and principalities; which plainly exhibits to us a celestial hierarchy, or superior and subordinate ranks of glory and power.

And why may it not be so amongst the saints on high, those sons of Adam who are made like to angels! They are so many stars that shine with various degrees of splendour, as they are placed nearer to the Sun of Righteousness, and receive and reflect more of his beams. I might multiply arguments on this head, but I shall at present ask only these two or three convincing questions.

Can we ever imagine that Moses the meek, the friend of God, who was, as it were, his confidant on earth, his faithful prophet to institute a new religion, and establish a new church in the world; who, for God's sake, endured forty years of banishment, and had forty years fatigue in a wilderness; who saw God on earth face to face, and the shine was left upon his countenance? Can we suppose that this man has taken his seat no nearer to God in paradise, than Samson and Jepthah, those rash champions, those rude and bloody ministers* of providence? Or can we think that St. Paul, the greatest of the apostles, *who laboured more than than they all,* and *was in sufferings* more abundant than the

* These expressions may be sufficiently justified, if we consider Jepthah's rash vow of sacrifice, which fell upon his only child; and Samson's rude or unbecoming conduct in his amours with the Philistine woman at Timnah, the harlot at Gaza, and his Delilah at Sorek, his bloody quarrels, and his manner of life. The learned and pious Dr. Owen, as I have often been informed by his intimate friend Sir John Hartopp, called him a rude believer. He might have a strong faith of miracles; *Heb.* xi. 22. but a small share of that faith which purifies the heart.

'est; who spent a long life in daily services and deaths for the sake 'f Christ, is not fitted for, and advanced to a rank of blessedness uperior to that of the crucified thief, who became a christian but few moments, at the end of a life of impiety and plunder? Can persuade myself, that a holy man, who has known much of lod in this world, and spent his age on earth in contemplation ' the divine excellencies, who has acquired a great degree of earness to God in devotion, and has served him, and suffered r him, even to old age and martyrdom, with a sprightly and ithful zeal; can I believe that this man, who has been trained) all his life to converse with God, and is fitted to receive divine mmunications above his fellows, shall dwell no nearer to God reafter, and share no larger a degree of blessedness, than the ttle babe who just entered into this world to die out of it, and 'ho is saved, so far as we know, merely by the spreading veil of ie covenant of grace, drawn over it by the hand of the parent's aith? Can it be that the great Judge who *cometh, and his reward s with him, to render to every one according to his works*, will nake no distinction between Moses and Samson, between the apostle and the thief, between the aged martyr and the infant, in the world to come?

And yet after all it may be matter of enquiry, whether the meanest saint among the sons of Adam, has not some sort of privilege above any rank of angels, by being of a kindred-nature to our Emmanuel, to Jesus the Son of God? But this leads me to the

Fourth degree of Blessedness.—IV. Let us stand still again, and wonder yet more at the blessedness of the man Christ Jesus in his approach to God.

1. His very union to God is habitual blessedness. He is constituted near to God by an unspeakable union. What joys, what unknown delights above our language, and above our thoughts, possess the holy soul of the man Jesus, for he is the nearest creature to the blessed God; for he is one with godhead; *John* x. 30. The Son of David, according to the flesh, is joined in a personal union to the eternal God, and thus he *is over all, God blessed for evermore*; Rom. ix. 5.

There was a time indeed, when the divine nature so far withheld its influences, as to let him feel sorrows and sharp agonies, when he came to make himself a sacrifice for our sins, and exposed his holy nature to pain and shame: He consented for a season to have God absent, but cried out terribly under the present anguish of it, and shall have no more trials of this kind. Christ *being raised from the dead, dieth no more*; Rom. vi. 9. The man 'ho was born of the virgin, shall now have the eternal Son of

God for ever manifesting himself in him and to him, according to this divine union.

This is that glorious piece of human nature, that one man, whom God has chosen, from all the rest of mankind, to bring so near to himself. This is that flesh, and that soul, which were chosen by God the Father's decree, from among all possible, and all future flesh and souls, to be made for ever one with God: and they are for ever one. This wondrous union has, and must have everlasting pleasure in it, vastly beyond our nearest unions and approaches to God even in our most exalted state in grace or glory. This is an approach to God indeed, *and blessed is the man whom thou hast thus chosen*, O Lord, and thus *caused to approach unto thee, that he may dwell, not only in thy courts, but in thy bosom*, in thyself for ever and ever: Blessed is this man, and may he be for ever blessed!*

2. His knowledge of God is much more intimate, more extensive, and more perfect, than any other creature can attain: for as he is exalted to the highest station and dignity that can belong to a creature, so we may be assured the all-wise God has furnished him with faculties of the noblest capacity, answerable to so exalted a station; and Christ has the highest advantage to fill all those capacities with inconceivable treasures of knowledge, by dwelling so near to God, and being so intimately united to Divine Wisdom. The sublime furniture of his understanding is vastly superior to all that we know, or can know; for our union to God is but a distant copy, his is the bright, but inimitable original. Our nearness to God bears no proportion to that of the man Jesus; for his union to the godhead is of a superior kind. He has therefore a vaster comprehension of all truth, and a sweeter relish in the survey of it, than any created spirit, angelic or human; and thereby this part of his blessedness becomes far superior to theirs.

3. All the outgoings of his holy soul towards God, all his desires, his love, and delight, are more noble in their kind, and more intense in their degree, than those of any other creature. He who dwells so near to godhead, sees vastly more beauty, excellency, and loveliness in the Deity, than men or angels can do at their distance; and therefore his love is raised to unknown heights and raptures.

* I know the word blessed, when it is applied to God or Christ, generally signifies, that they are the objects of our blessing or praise, and it is thus translated from the originals, ברך or ευλογητος: But in our tongue this word signifies also happy, and the original words אשרי and Μακαριος are frequently rendered blessed, to signify happiness, as in my text. Though, if our translators had always observed the distinction, the precise sense of the original had better appeared.

All his worship of the Father consists of nobler acts, and nearer approaches, than it is possible for any other creature to perform or partake of. Jesus, the man, worshipped here on earth, and he worships above in glory: He loves the godhead, as infinitely more amiable than himself; he trusts in it as more powerful; acknowledges God is above him in every glory, in every beauty infinitely superior to him; and this is divine worship; for a creature is still beneath God, and the acknowledgment of it is the worship due from him. Now Christ pays this acknowledgment with greater humility than the meanest worm of the race of Adam; for the nearer he is to God, the better he knows the true distance of a creature; and because he does it with greater humility, therefore with sweeter delight; for the lower a creature lies before God, the nearer doth God approach it. *The High and Holy One, who inhabiteth eternity, and dwelleth in the high and holy place, dwelleth also with the humble soul;* Is. lvii. 15. But this leads me to a farther degree of the blessedness of the man Christ Jesus; and that is,

4. He hath a fuller, a richer, and a more transporting sense of the love of God, since God makes nearer approaches to him, and discovers more of his infinite goodness, and communicates more of his love. We may venture to say, that God loves the human nature of Christ better than he does any other creature; and this human nature has a stronger, and more intimate consciousness of the divine love, and a sweeter sensation of it, than saints or angels can have, because of the personal union between the son of man and the eternal God: which union, though we know not precisely what it is, yet, we know to be sufficient to give him the name Emmanuel, God with us; which distinguishes it most gloriously from all our unions to God, and raises his dignity, his character, and his advantages, even as a man, to so sublime a degree above that of all other creatures.

By his exaltation, and his dwelling so near to God, his powers are inconceivably enlarged, and made capable of taking in higher degrees of felicity. Sights of God stretch the faculties of the soul, and enlarge it to receive more of God; this eternal sight has our Redeemer. We see the glory of God chiefly in the face of Christ Jesus his Son, but he sees the glory of God in his own face and brightness, Christ himself is *the brightness of his Father's glory;* Heb. i. 2, 3.

5. As Christ is the medium of our nearness to God, as he is the head of all those who approach to God, and the Mediator through whom all approach, so his blessedness is above ours; for in some sense, and by way of eminence, he enjoys and feels all that we enjoy and feel, and vastly more too; for he is the

medium through which we approach and we enjoy, as well as a person who himself, and for himself, approaches and enjoys: As when a stream of wine or living water is conveyed from the spring by a pipe or channel, the pipe has a tincture of the rich liquor as it flows; so, if it be lawful to illustrate things heavenly and divine, by things on earth, and to bring them down to our ideas by material similitudes, our Lord Jesus, who is authorised to confer life and joy on the saints, and through whom all grace, glory, and blessedness, are conveyed to them, feels, and tastes, and relishes, eminently and in a superior manner, all the joy and the blessedness that he conveys to our souls; and all better than we can do, for he is nearer the fountain; he takes a divine and unknown satisfaction in every blessing which he communicates to us. Besides all this, there are some richer streams that terminate and end in himself; the peculiar privileges and pleasures of the good man, while others flow through him, as the head, down to all his members, and give him the first relish of their sweetness.

When Christ, at the head of all the elect saints, shall at the great day draw near to the Father, and say, *Here am I and the children thou hast given me;* those blessed ones whom *thou hast chosen, that they may approach unto thee* by me; I have often approached to thee for them, and behold I now approach with them to the courts of thy upper house. What manner of joy and glory shall this be! How unspeakably blessed is our Lord Jesus; and we rejoice with wonder!

[This sermon may be divided here.]

Fifth, or supreme degree of Blessedness.—V. Our admiration may be raised yet higher, if we make one excursion beyond all created nature, and lift our thoughts upward to the blessedness of the three glorious persons in the trinity*. All their infinite and unknown pleasures are derived from their ineffable union and communion in one godhead, their inconceivable nearness to each other in the very centre and spring of all felicity. They are inseparably and intimately one with God; they are eternally one God, and therefore eternally blessed; 1 John v. 7. *For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one;* which text I believe to be authentic and divine, and that upon just reasons, notwithstanding all the cavils and criticisms that have endeavoured to blot it out of the bible. Nor is their blessedness, or their nearness, a dull inactive state: Knowledge and mutual love make up their heaven, so far as mortals dare conceive of it, and so far as we have leave to speak of God after the manner of men.

* See the note toward the end of this part of the sermon, p. 151.

First, Knowledge.—An eternal blissful contemplation of all the infinite beauties, powers, and properties of godhead, and of all the operations of these powers in an inconceivable variety among creatures, is the glorious employment of God. His own knowledge of infinite truths, whether wrapt up in his own nature, or unfolded and displayed in his works, is a pleasure becoming the Deity; and each sacred person possesses this unknown pleasure.

And besides the general glories of the divine nature, we may suppose, that a full and comprehensive knowledge of the sameness, the difference, the special properties, and the mutual relations of the three divine persons, which are utterly incomprehensible to mortals, and perhaps far above the reach of all created minds, is the incommunicable entertainment of the holy Trinity, and makes a part of their blessedness. In reference to this mystery, God may be said to dwell in thick darkness; 1 *Kings* viii. 12. or, which is all one, in light inaccessible; 1 *Tim.* vi. 16. We are lost in this glorious, this divine abyss, and overcome with dazzling confusion: But the ever blessed Three behold these unities and distinctions in the clearest light. *As the Father knoweth me, so know I the Father*, saith Jesus the eternal Son; *John* x. 15. And *as the spirit of a man knoweth the things of a man, so the things of God are known to his own Spirit*, for *he searcheth the depths of God;* 1 Cor. ii. 10, 11. as it is expressed in the original, τὰ βάθη τοῦ Θεοῦ.

But God's contemplation, or knowledge of himself, is not his only pleasure, for God is love; 1 *John* iv. 8. He has an infinite propensity towards himself, and an inconceivable complacence in his own powers and perfections, as well as in all the outgoings of them toward created natures. His love being most wise and perfect, must exert itself toward the most perfect object, and the chiefest good; and that in a degree answerable to its goodness too: Therefore he can love nothing in the same degree with himself, because he can find no equal good.

May we not therefore suppose the blessedness of the sacred Three to consist also in mutual love? May I call it a perpetual delightful tendency, and active propensity toward each other? An eternal approach to each other with infinite complacency? An eternal embrace of each other with arms of inimitable love and with sensations of unmeasurable joy? Thus saith the Son of God under the character of divine wisdom; Prov. viii. 23, 30. *I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. Then was I by him as one brought up with him, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him.* As the Father loveth the Son, so the Son loveth the Father. As the Father delights infinitely in his perfect image, so may we not venture

to say, the Son takes infinite delight in the glorious archetype, and thus imitates the Father? Will not the expressions of the apostle Paul; *Heb.* i. 3. and the words of Christ himself; *John* v. 19, 20. encourage and support this manner of speaking? He *is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person: The Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and what things soever he seeth the Father do, these also doth the Son likewise.* And this seems to be the first foundation of those glorious offices of raising the dead, and judging the world, which in the following verses are committed to the Son, *that all men may honour the Son, as they honour the Father;* ver. 23.

As the blessed Three have an unknown communion in the Godhead, or divine nature, so they must have an unspeakable nearness to one another's persons, an inconceivable in-being and in-dwelling in each other. *John* xiv. 10. I in the Father, and the Father in me. Each is near to the two other divine subsistences, and this mutual nearness must be attended with delight and felicity unknown to all but the blessed Three who enjoy it. O glorious and divine communion! The Father for ever near to his own image the Son, and herein blessed! The Son never divided from the embraces of the Father, and therefore happy! The Spirit everlastingly near them both, and therefore he is the ever-blessed Spirit! And all these united in one Godhead, and therefore infinitely and for ever blessed!

The Father is so intimately near the Son and Spirit, that no

infinite delight. In order to illustrate the happiness of the sacred Three, may we not suppose something of society necessary to the perfection of happiness in all intellectual nature? To know, and be known, to love and to be beloved, are perhaps, such essential ingredients of complete felicity, that it cannot subsist without them: And it may be doubted whether such mutual knowledge and love, as seems requisite for this end, can be found in a nature absolutely simple in all respects. May we not then suppose that some distinctions in the divine Being are of eternal necessity, in order to complete the blessedness of godhead? Such a distinction as may admit, as a great man expresses it, of delicious society, "We, for our parts, cannot but hereby have in our minds a more gustful idea of a blessed state, than we can conceive in mere eternal solitude.

And if this be true, then the three differences, which we call personal distinctions, in the nature of God, are as absolutely necessary as his blessedness, as his being, or any of his perfections. And then we may return to the words of my text, and boldly infer, that if the man is blessed who is chosen by the free and sovereign grace of God, and caused to approach, or draw near him, what immense and unknown blessedness belongs to each divine person, to all the sacred Three who are by nature, and unchangeable necessity, so near, so united, so much one, that the least moment's separation seems to be infinitely impossible, and, then we may venture to say, it is not to be conceived; and the blessedness is conceiveable by none but God?

This is a nobler union and a more intense pleasure than the man Christ Jesus knows or feels, or can conceive; for he is a creature. These are glories too divine and dazzling for the weak eye of our understandings, too bright for the eye of angels, those morning-stars; and they, and we, must fall down together, alike overwhelmed with them, and alike confounded. These are flights that tire souls of the strongest wing, and finite minds faint in the infinite pursuit: These are depths where our tallest thoughts sink and drown: We are lost in this ocean of being and blessedness, that has no limit, on either side, no surface, no bottom, no shore. The nearness of the divine persons to each other, and the unspeakable relish of their unbounded pleasures, are too vast ideas for a bounded mind to entertain. It is one infinite transport that runs through Father, Son, and Spirit, without beginning, and without end, with boundless variety, yet ever perfect, and ever present, without change, and without degree: and all this, because they are so near to one another, and so much one with God.

But when we have fatigued our spirits, and put them to the utmost stretch, we must lie down and rest, and confess the great

incomprehensible. How far this sublime transport of joy is varied in each subsistence: how far their mutual knowledge of each others properties, or their mutual delight in each others love, is distinct in each divine person, is a secret too high for the present determination of our language and our thoughts, it commands our judgment into silence, and our whole souls into wonder and adoration*.

Thus we have traced the streams of happiness that flow amongst the creatures in endless variety, to their original and eternal fountain, God himself: He is the all-sufficient spring of blessedness as well as of being, to all the intellectual worlds; and he is everlastingly self-sufficient for his own being and blessedness.

But are not we told in scripture, that *God delights in the works of his hands*, that *he takes pleasure in his saints*, that *he rejoices in Zion*, and *rests in his love* to his church; that Jesus Christ, even as man Mediator, is the *beloved of his soul, in whom he is well-pleased?* Yes, surely, this is one way whereby he represents his own divine satisfactions in our language, and after the manner of men. But we must not imagine that he ever goes out of himself, and descends to creatures, as though he needed any thing from them, who are all before him as nothing, and less than nothing, and vanity. It is from his own wisdom, power, and goodness, as they appear in all his works, that his delight arises; and it is in these glories of his nature, and in the gracious purposes of his will, as they are manifested in his works, that the saints and angels, and all the happy ranks of beings, find their highest satisfaction. It is in the contemplation of God, and in the exercises and sensations of divine love, that all supreme felicity consists, so far as we are capable of being acquainted with it.

The only reflection with which I shall conclude the subject,

* This discourse was delivered above twenty years ago, and the reader will observe some warmer efforts of imagination than riper years would indulge on a theme so sublime and abstruse. Since I have searched most studiously into this mystery of late, I have learned more of my own ignorance: so that when I speak of these unsearchables, I abate much of my younger assurance; nor do my later thoughts venture so far into the particular modes of explaining the sacred distinction in the godhead. There appears to me good reason to doubt, where there can be three distinct and different principles of consciousness, and three distinct and different wills in the one God, the one infinite Spirit. I was afraid to assert it in this sermon heretofore, and I am more afraid to assert it now. Reason and scripture join to teach me, that there can be but one God, and this God is a Spirit. What distinctions may be in this one Spirit, I know not: Yet, since I am fully established in the belief of the Deity of the blessed Three, though I know not the manner of explication, I dare let this discourse appear now in the world, as being agreeable so far to my present sentiments on this subject. A larger and more particular account of my most mature thought on the doctrine of the holy Trinity, may be seen in the last sermon of my third volume.—*April* 8, 1729.

is this, that communion with God, which has been impiously ridiculed by the profane wits of the last and the present age, is no such visionary and fantastic notion as they imagine; but as it is founded in the words of scripture, so it may be explained with great ease and evidence to the satisfaction of human reason. That it is founded in scripture, appears sufficiently in several verses of the xvii. chapter of St. John's gospel, where the divine union and blessedness of the Father and the Son, are made a pattern of our union to God, and our blessedness; John xvii. 21, 22, 23—26. *That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they may be one in us:* And in this sense, but in a lower degree, even here on earth, *our communion, or fellowship, is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ;* 1 John i. 3. Though our communion with Christ includes also some particular varieties in it, which is not my present business to explain.

That this doctrine is exactly agreeable to reason, may be thus demonstrated:

We use the word communion, when two or more persons partake of the same thing. So friends have communion in one table when they dine together: Christians have communion in one sermon, in one prayer, or one sacrament, when they join together in those parts of worship; and the saints have communion with God in blessedness, when they rejoice in the same object of contemplation and love. God surveys himself, he is pleased with his own glories, delights in himself as the highest and the noblest object; he trusts in his own right-hand of power, he leans upon his own understanding, he rests in his own counsels and purposes, he feels and he acknowledges all his own infinite perfections, and thus he enjoys them all. Thus also is our blessedness frequently set forth in scripture. It is our happiness to know God, to contemplate his glories, so far as they are revealed; to love him and his goodness, to trust in his wisdom, and lean securely on his strength? to feel the workings of divine powers and graces in and upon us, and to make acknowledgment of them all to God. Thus the image of God is restored to us in holiness and in happiness: Thus we are said to be holy as God is holy; and thus also we are blessed as God is blessed.

But though we are admitted to this amazing privilege, and bold communion with God, in the same object of contemplation and love, yet we must still remember, with humble adoration, that his holiness and his happiness, does infinitely exceed ours. The pleasures which arise from his knowledge, and his love of himself, are as far above our taste, or all our ideas of blessedness, as heaven is higher than the earth, or as God is above the creature.

There is another sense also of this phrase, communion or fellowship with God, which has been used by many pious writers, when they make it to signify the same thing as converse with God; and this also depends upon our nearness, or approach to him: As when a christian, in secret, pours out his whole heart before God, and is made sensible of his gracious presence, by the sweet influences of instruction, sanctification, or comfort. When man speaks, and God answers, there is a sacred communion, between God and man; Is. lviii. 9. *Thou shalt call, and the Lord shall answer.* This holy David often enjoyed, and always sought after it. When the soul, in secret, complains of perplexity and darkness, and God is pleased to give some secret hints of direction and advice; when the soul mourns before God, confessing guilt, and the weakness of grace, and some divine promise is impressed upon the mind by the Holy Spirit, whence the christian derives peace of conscience, and strength to fulfil duty, and to resist mighty temptations: These certainly are seasons of converse or communion with God.

So when, in public worship, we address God with our souls in fervent prayer, and while we hear the word of God spoken to us by his ministers, we receive an answer to those prayers in the convincing and sanctifying impressions which the word makes upon the heart; this is also an hour of secret communion. So at the supper of the Lord, when with hope and joy we receive the bread and the wine, as divine seals of the faithfulness of God's convenant, and when we transact those solemn affairs also as seals of our faith and love, and our engagements to be the Lord's; we may properly be said to hold *fellowship, or communion with him.*

What swift advances of holiness doth the saint feel in his heart, and practise in his life, after such seasons of devotion! What glory doth he give to religion in a dark and sinful world! What unknown pleasure doth he find in such approaches to God! And he moves swiftly onward in his way to heaven, by such daily receipts of mercy, and returns of praise. These are powerful motives that will make him persist in his holy practice and joy, in scorn of all the mockery and ridicule of a profane age of infidels. So the moon holds bright communion with the sun, the sovereign planet; so she receives and reflects his beams; she shines gloriously in a dark hemisphere, and moves onward sublime in her heavenly course, regardless of all the barking animals that betray their senseless malice.

This blessed privilege and pleasure of converse with God, which is enjoyed by the saints on earth, is doubtless the pleasure and the privilege of the spirits of the just made perfect, and of angels near the throne, but in a much higher degree: When they

address the Majesty of Heaven in the forms of celestial worship, and receive immediate and sensible tokens of divine acceptance; or when they take their orders and commissions from the throne for some particular errand, or high employment, and return again to make their humble report there: These are glorious seasons of converse with their Maker.

Much more glorious communion of this kind does the man Christ Jesus enjoy with God, in transacting all the vast and illustrious affairs of his commission; a commission large as the extent of his Father's kingdom, full of majesty and justice, terror and grace; a divine commission to govern, to redeem, and to save, or to punish and destroy millions of mankind, as well as to rule all his unknown dominions in the upper and nether worlds.

But in what manner this communion between the Father and Christ is maintained, we know not; nor can we guess in what manner, or in what degree such sort of converse or communion as this is practised, or is possible, between the three glorious persons of the ever-blessed Trinity. These are mysteries wrapt up in sacred darkness, and the explication of them surrounded with dangers. A particular knowledge of these divine unsearchables, any farther than scripture has revealed them, is by no means necessary either to begin, or to maintain our state of grace. Let us content ourselves a few years longer with humble ignorance, and we shall have brighter discoveries in the future world, if it be necessary there to fulfil our happiness, and to complete our state of glory.

HYMN FOR SERMON XII.

The Scale of Blessedness; or Blessed Saints, Blessed Saviour, and Blessed Trinity.

ASCEND, my soul, by just degrees,
Let contemplation rove
O'er all the rising ranks of bliss,
Here, and in worlds above.

Blest is the nation near to God,
Where he makes known his ways:
Blest are the men whose feet have trod
His lower courts of grace.

Blest were the levite and the priest,
Who near his altar stood;
Blest are the saints from sin releas'd,
And reconcil'd with blood.

Blest are the souls dismiss'd from clay,
Before his face they stand:
Blest angels in their bright array,
Attend his great command.

Jesus is more divinely blest,
Where man to godhead join'd,
Hath joys transcending all the rest,
More noble and refin'd.

But, O what words or thoughts can trace
The blessed Three in one!
Here rest my spirit, and confess
The infinite unknown.

TWO SERMONS

On our Appearance before God here and hereafter.

Delivered in Sir Thomas Abney's Family at Theobalds in Hertfordshire, at the Evening-worship, Nov. 25, and Dec. 9, 1716.

To the Right Worshipful Sir Thomas Abney, Knt. AND ALDERMAN OF LONDON.

WORTHY SIR,

WHILE you were restrained by the laws of men from public worship in that way which you have chosen, I also suffered the same restraint, by the providence of God confining me to long sickness; during which time I enjoyed in your excellent family, many happy conveniences, toward the ease of my affliction, and the recovery of my health.

I thought it therefore a necessary piece of christian gratitude, that some of the first-fruits of my labours should be devoted to your service; and with this view I attempted such meditations as might be well suited to my own circumstances of confinement, as well as to yours; that I might speak more sensibly from the heart to your spiritual advantage, and to the profit of all your household.

Since that time it has pleased the providence of God to take off your restraint entirely, by the repeal of that unrighteous law, and to give you the pleasures of his sanctuary; yet the review of these discourses, through the operation of the blessed Spirit, may renew some useful meditations, when offered from the press as a testimony of public thankfulness, and in this new form proposed to your perusal, by,

SIR,

Your most affectionate,

And obedient servant,

Under many obligations,

I. WATTS.

SERMON XIII.

Appearance before God here and hereafter.

PSALM xlii. 2.—When shall I come and appear before God.

THE FIRST PART.

THE holy Psalmist was now absent from his usual place of public worship, and restrained from coming near to the ark of God which was the token of the divine presence in the days of the Jewish church; and when he had been meditating on his past and present circumstances in this respect, both what he enjoyed heretofore, and what he was deprived of now, he breaks out into a divine rapture: *As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.* And he goes on to describe the frame of his spirit in this holy song: The substance and sense of the whole psalm is, as it were, epitomized and drawn up into these few words, *when shall I come and appear before God?* I shall not spend time to shew in how many senses man may be said *to appear before God;* but shall content myself to say, that in this place it signifies attendance on public worship, in the place where it was usually celebrated and performed. In the words of the Psalmist we may find the temper of his heart expressed under these two general heads.

I. A belief of the special presence of God in his ordinances of public worship.—II. An earnest longing after them on that account.

I shall enlarge a little on each of these, and make remarks as I go along, under each head.

First, The words express David's firm belief of the special presence of God in his ordinances, insomuch that he calls an attendance on them, an appearance before God. We are always in the view of God, and *every creature is naked and open* in his sight, and for ever appears before him as the all-seeing and all-knowing Creator and Governor of all things; but it is a peculiar, a gracious, and favourable presence of God that belongs to his sanctuary, his appointed worship: God is taking special notice of our carriage toward him, and manifesting his designs of special mercy towards us.

David well knew this, that the great end of appointing public

worship, was, that there might be a communication between God and man, who were so dreadfully separated by sin: He knew the gracious promise, that where God *recorded his name, there would he come and meet his people, and bless them;* Ex. xx. 24. He knew what sensible tokens of divine presence were found in the sanctuary; there was *the ark of God, and the mercy-seat that covered it*, upon which God dwelt in a bright shining *cloud* between the golden *cherubims*, to signify his dwelling in light among the glorious angels in heaven; beside the many sweet experiences which David had of sensible discoveries of God in counsel and grace, strength and consolation, in his public worship.

And have not christians, under the gospel, as great a reason to expect the special presence of God among them in his ordinances! Are they not appointed on purpose to bring God near to us, and to bring us near to God? Have we not an express promise of God himself, dwelling in flesh, that *where two or three are gathered together in his name, he will be in the midst of them;* Mat. xviii. 20. and is not Christ worthy of credit? Have we not his word there published and preached? Doth not God appear there very eminently, in the glory of his truth, in the beauty of his holiness, in the purity of his commands, in the terror of his threatenings, in the sweetness of his promises, in the wonders of his wisdom and power, and more amazing works of his grace and love? Doth not the Lord discover himself there in the majesty of his government, in the miracles of his providence, and the

mercy. It was for this purpose that Christ, at his departure from earth, engaged the promise of his presence with his ministers in the preaching of his gospel. *Lo I am with you always even to the end of the world;* Mat. xxviii. 20. And is not this sufficient ground for men to expect and hope to see God there?

Besides all this, have not christians enjoyed blessed experiences of the presence of God *in his sanctuary, in the assemblies of his saints?* One can say, "I was all darkness and ignorance, and there I found divine light, discovering to me my sin and misery, and his salvation." Another can say, I was *dead in sin*, and found my soul raised to a divine life there; "I was mourning and despairing, and there I found a word of support and holy joy, such as no mere words of men could convey into me; and I am forced to confess *God was in this place of a truth;*" 1 Cor. xiv. 25.

Remarks on the first head.—I. How much should we guard hypocrisy in divine worship, because it is an appearance before God? We do then, in a solemn manner, set ourselves before God, and, as it were, humbly call God to look upon us, and take notice of our hearts. Let us remember this, every one of us, when we go to public worship, we do in effect say to God, "O Lord, we are always in thy sight, but in a special manner we now come to shew thee our hearts, to acquaint thee humbly with our wants, our sorrows, and our sins, our desires and hopes; and *God will not hold him guiltless that takes his name in vain; He is a jealous God, he will not be mocked;* Gal. vi. 7. *He is a Spirit, and he will be worshipped in spirit and in truth;* John iv. 24. He is sharp-sighted, he sees through our souls, and knows the ends and designs of our coming, whether to see creatures, and be seen of them, or to see himself, our Creator: Whether to observe the modes, dress, and behaviour of our fellow-creatures on earth, or to learn the will of God, and the mode of heaven. Suppose Jesus Christ, in his human nature, were there, whose *eyes are as a flame of fire*, and through your countenances can discern the most secret thought of your souls, would you not stand in awe of his majesty? Would not this glorious appearance fix the most vain and fluttering imagination in a pious solemnity? How solicitously would you watch over your minds, lest they wander from worship! How carefully would you keep your hearts! Or suppose you saw the holy angels there which attend the churches in worship, would you not be ashamed to trifle in their presence? And has not the spiritual presence of the great God as much real, though invisible awfulness and majesty in it!

How do persons both of the polite and the vulgar world, all agree to dress fine and gay, and make the best figure of all the week, to appear before men on the day of the Lord? But let us remember that we come not only before men, but before the

living God, in whose sight, ornaments of the body are of no account, and, O, what pains ought we to take, to put on our best ornaments of the mind! To see that our graces all shine, when we are to stand before God! And not to suffer one vain thought, one corrupt affection to work in us; nor *a spot or blemish*, if possible, to be found upon us!

Alas! what millions of hypocrites have we in the world? How many may we fear in every congregation? How many come to attend at prayers, but never seek to join in their own wishes and desires with the words of him who speaks? How many voices follow the tune in a psalm, but their souls feel no joy, no inward elevation of praise? How many hear the word as the word of man, and their hearts have no sense of God speaking to them? *They sit before God as his people, but their heart goes after their covetousness*; Ezek. xxxiii. 31. after their idols of business, or carnal pleasure, after every vain object of their eyes, or vainer images of the fancy. Let us take heed therefore, how we shut our eyes, or harden our hearts against a present and a speaking God; *for the word of the Lord is quick and powerful*; God speaking by his eternal word, or by his ministers in the sanctuary, pierces the secret recesses of the soul and spirit: God sits there: *discerning the intents and thoughts of the heart*; *all things are naked and open before his eyes with whom we have to do*; Heb. iv. 13.

II. Remark. In attendance on public worship, we should fix all our hope and expectation of profit upon the presence of God in it; for the design of ordinances is to bring us to *appear before God*. Now, if in things of this life, God should be our chief hope, much more in things of another; Ps. lxii. 5. *My soul, wait thou only upon God, my expectation is from him.*

How ready are we, even in spiritual concernments, to depend on outward forms and ceremonials! and to hope, or despair of success, according to some circumstantial attendants on worship? One is ready to say, "If it were a nice enquiry into some deep doctrine, I should get something by hearing the word." Another complains, "Alas! If it had been a sermon of grace and privileges, I had not been so careless in my attention, nor wasted my time." And a third satisfies his conscience with this, "If I had heard moral duties enforced powerfully on our practice, then I could profit by the preaching; or if he who ministers had but more skill in composing, more fervency of speech, more warmth in delivery, more graceful pronunciations, more strength of argument; surely I should feel more lasting impressions of religion under every sermon." And thus we go on from week to week, and worship without any sensible benefit, because we seek all from men.

But, alas! if all these things were exactly suited to our rishes, the matter ever so agreeable, the manner ever so enter-aining, the voice ever so charming, and the performance ever so ffectionate; if God be not there, there is no lasting benefit; *Paul ay plant, and Apollos water, but God gives the increase:* 1 Cor. i. 6. The ministration of the word is committed to man, but ot the *ministration of the Spirit.* What can a man do to give yes to the blind? To give ears to the deaf? Can a man make e lame to walk? or raise the dead to a divine life? and turn nners into saints? *Who is sufficient for these things?*

A minister is ready to say, "When shall I preach to such a eople? they would learn and profit by my sermons." A chris-an is ready to say, When shall I hear such a minister, or partake f such an ordinance, or hear a discourse on such a subject ma-aged in such a particular method? And they are ready to go way discouraged, as though all hope were gone, when they find . disappointment in the pulpit; as though the graces of God vere confined to a particular instrument, or as though the words f a man were our only hope.

When any of us have been at church, and waited in the anctuary, let us examine what did we go thither to see; a shadow of religion? An outside of christian forms? a graceful orator? The figures and shapes of devotion? Surely then we might with as much wisdom, and more innocence, have gone *to the wilder-ness to see a reed shaken with the wind.* Can we say as the Greeks at the feast; John xii. 21. *We would see Jesus?* Or, as Absa-lom; 2 Sam. xiv. 32. *It is to little purpose I am come to Jerusa-lem, if I may not see the king's face.* To little purpose we go to church, or attend on ordinances, if we seek not, if we see not God there.

III. Remark. What everlasting thanks are due to our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath made way for our *appearance be-fore God* with comfort and hope? You are called by the name of christians, you profess to believe in him, but you know little what you have to do with him, or what use his name is of in reli-gion, if you can go daily to appear in the presence of God with-out him; you know not the nature of christianity, if you do not feel a want of Christ when you bow yourselves before God.

Consider a little what God is, and what you are, that you may have a due sense of the necessity of Christ; say to your-selves, "I am going to appear before the great and glorious God, a God of infinite perfection, and I am a little vessel of mere im-perfection and infirmity; what shall I do to stand in his sight? He is a God of majesty and judgment, and I traitor, a rebel by nature and action; I want some person to introduce me into his

favour. He is a God of spotless holiness, and I am defiled with a thousand sins, who shall make me appear lovely in his sight! he is a God of inflexible justice, and I a guilty wretch, a criminal, a malefactor, already condemned; who shall plead for me, and obtain a pardon?" O beg of Christ to introduce you with acceptance; in him alone can we appear well-pleasing to God: He is the beloved of the Father, and if we are ever accepted, it must be in the beloved; Eph. i. 6. Christ *appears now in the presence of God for us*, in the virtue of his blood and spotless obedience; *Heb.* ix. 12, 24. He who once appeared with sin imputed, *was made sin for us*, and was treated as a sinner in the world for our sakes, now appears before God, without sin, in heaven, as our *great High Priest* and Surety, to make us acceptable to God there. Nor should our warmest devotions, nor our highest praises, dare to appear there without him.

Remember that the high priest himself among the Jews, was in danger of death, whensoever he went into the *holy of holies*, to appear before the tokens of the divine presence, if he had not proper garments upon him, and *the blood of atonement* with him; see *Ex.* xxviii. 35, 43. *Lev.* xvi. 2, 13, 14. Let Aaron be clothed, and *the blood so sprinkled*, saith the Lord, *lest he die*. How much more may we fear destruction, if we rashly, or carelessly, come near and speak to God himself, and yet neglect the garment of righteousness, and *the blood of sprinkling*, and Christ our great Mediator.

Remember, O christian, that for a sinner to appear before God without the Mediator, is a thing of infinite terror, and not of comfort. A traitor would keep at the farthest distance from the prince, if he hath no friend to speak a word for him there. To come and present yourselves before God as sinners, without a Saviour, would be but to awaken his wrath, and put him in mind of your guilt, and his righteous vengeance. Remember therefore to take Christ with you when you come near to God. See Eph. ii. 3, 13, &c. "We are by nature children of wrath, and afar off from God," it is he only can bring us near:—"No man cometh to the Father but by me;" John xiv. 6.

And as this is the only appointed way for sinners to appear before God, so it has been the sweet experience of ten thousand souls that they have drawn near to God, in this manner, with acceptance and delight. Hear what many a child of God can tell you in this case: "When I had the first sight of my guilt and defilements, and beheld God in the terrors of his holiness and justice, as *a consuming fire*, I was affrighted at the thoughts of appearing before him; every threatening that I heard, I thought it was pronounced against me, nor could I delight myself in the blessings of his gospel, for they were not mine. But when he was

leased to lead and draw me to Christ, I saw such an all-sufficiency of atonement and righteousness in him, that would answer ll the demands that divine justice had upon me; I joyfully accepted of this salvation, I surrendered myself as the subject of is saving grace: And though now I behold God in the same lorious and dreadful attributes as before, and behold myself still efiled and sinful, yet I humbly dare appear before him daily and ourly, for Jesus is my intercessor, he is my *propitiation*, he is e Lord my righteousness, and my God sits upon a mercy-seat prinkled with the blood of this heavenly sacrifice. My sins are any and great, and the matter of my daily groaning; I hear e threatenings and curses of his holy law, but they affright me ot from his presence; for in the name of my Mediator I come, ho hath borne the curse for me: With humble penitence, and ith a lively faith, I draw near to a reconciled God, and give eteral thanks to the Reconciler."

IV. Remark. What a blessing it is to have many houses of od in the nation where we dwell, and those houses of God near s! God may say to us, as to Israel; *Deut.* xxx. 12. "Say ot who shall ascend into heaven to bring the word to us, that we ay hear it? Or, who shall go over the sea, &c. for the word is ery nigh to us." We need not travel so far as the Jews, three imes every year, to public worship; and yet they "went from trength to strength, till they appeared before God in Zion;" Ps. lxxxiv. 7. Consider some nations where God is not worshipped right, and hath no dwelling-place; consider how far some poor reatures come even in this island, many miles from their own dwelling, to appear before God in his ordinances; but God seats his throne, as it were, at our doors: there are many synagogues of God in our land, for us to appear before him, and many near s in the city where we dwell, and near us too in this place of retirement.

How valuable a privilege is it to dwell in a religious family, a house of God, where there is a *church in the house*, as Phil. erse 2. where we often appear before God? How gladly would any persons (who are in better circumstances in the world than me of us enjoy) exchange those better circumstances for spiritual advantages such as we have: But some of you perhaps may y, "We may be saved without so much religion, without so uch ado about the worship of God in families or in churches." et me tell you, if a religious family be not a pleasure to you, aven itself cannot afford you pleasure; for that is but one great ligious family, of which Jesus Christ is the head: And if the siness of that place be not your delight, you shall never have a ace there.

Shall I ask the servants of this house, when you are called

have any thing to do with God: Their chief motive is the fear of hell, and therefore they drudge on in toilsome and undelightful religion.

And indeed this is one great reason why so many true christians feel no more longing after God, either in public or in private worship; because, though they have some faith and some cold hope, yet they are contented to abide in this state of uncertainty, without joy or assurance, and do not make it their business to advance in christianity: They cannot rejoice in God as their father, or their friend, with a lively soul; and they find but little pleasure in his house. But it is a divine pleasure, and a-kin to heaven, when a child of God, with a lively faith and joyful spirit, comes before God as his God, and entertains himself with all the blessed discoveries that he makes of his wisdom and grace in his churches, with all the promises of the covenant, with all the words of love that God hath written in his book, or publishes in his ordinances by the ministry of men. He feeds upon heavenly provisions in his Father's house; and when he departs, he maintains on his soul a sweet savour of heaven. But alas! there is a great withdrawment of the Spirit of God from his churches; a deadness of heart has seized believers in our day, and they grow carnal: O pray that the Spirit may return to the sanctuary again!

II. Remark. How comfortable a thing would it be, to feel our souls longing for divine ordinances more earnestly after restraint! We should learn the language of Jonah, when in the belly of the whale; Lord, *I am cast out of thy sight, yet I will look again toward thy holy temple;* Jonah ii. 4. I will look while I am at a distance, and pray toward the mercy-seat, in hope and desire to come near the sanctuary.

We are too ready to grow indifferent, and think we can do well enough without this appearing before God? We grow, as it were strangers to him by long absence; and though the sacred correspondence in public be lost, yet sometimes it is not much regretted: This is a frequent distemper of the soul. When fasting increases a regular appetite, it is a sign of a healthy constitution; but weakly natures are so overwhelmed with a little fasting, that their appetite is gone too. Many christians may complain of this, and say, "Though I find some relish of pleasure when I am in the house of God, and amongst his saints; and though it was very painful to me to endure the first months of confinement, yet a long restraint has brought me under the spiritual disease, that my appetite and desire grow feeble, and my heart too indifferent to public worship.

Now in order to enquire into the temp rof our spirits, and to awaken us to greater longings after divine ordinances, let us con-

sider what are the two chief ends of a christian in his appearance before God: It is either to do something for God by a public profession of his name among men, or to receive something from him in order to our own comfort and salvation. If we hope to receive, this calls faith into exercise; if we endeavour to do something for his service, this awakens our zeal. Now, is our faith active? Is our zeal lively in this matter? Some christians have one of these, some the other most in exercise: Some look most at honouring God in a public profession, some at obtaining some sensible benefit and delight to their own souls: But it is best when both of these invite us to the sanctuary, and make us long after the presence of God.

Some of us, it may be, have found the work of grace and salvation begun on our souls at public worship; there we were first awakened and convinced of sin, there we were first led to the knowledge and faith of Christ, and pardoning grace was revealed with power by the ministry of the word; therefore we long after the *sincere milk of the word*, in the same public dispensation of it, *that we may grow thereby*. Others have been favoured, it may be, with the presence of God more abundantly in secret; and reading, and meditation, and secret prayer, have been the chief sensible instruments of their conversion, sanctification, and peace; these therefore, sometimes have not the same earnest longing after public preaching as others have; yet they do continually attend on the ordinances of Christ in public, to maintain religion, in the profession of it, among men; and they ought to do it. But these persons are most in danger of growing cold and indifferent.

I grant it is a glorious and self-denying temper, to maintain a warm zeal to do much for the honour of God in the world, even though we enjoy but little of him; but this is not so frequent among men: For we are usually drawn to God by the blessings we hope to receive; and we should consider, that an utter neglect of all those enjoyments of God in the sensible increase of grace and joy, which are to be found in public worship, is a sign that our faith runs too low: We do not expect to receive much from God, even in his own appointed methods; and therefore we grow negligent whether we worship him in public or not. O let the soul who feels nothing of this negligence, but maintains a warm desire of ordinances under long restraint, rejoice and bless the Lord!

However, while any of us are confined, our desires after God ought to appear in this, that we often seek him in secret, and are perpetually with him in our thoughts; that we take all proper opportunities to lift up our souls to him in the midst of common affairs, and thus do what we can to make

appears before God here in the form of devotion: And to put him in mind he must ere long stand before God in another manner than now he does, and to set his thoughts at work to compare one with the other in these particulars:

1. The sinner now appears with some degree of willingness in the presence of God, then it is under a terrible constraint. A wicked man may be willing to come to public ordinances for many carnal ends, as to comply with his superiors, to follow the custom of the family where he dwells, to gain reputation among men, to satisfy the cries of an awakened conscience; for his conscience, perhaps, will not be easy without the performance of some duties; and so he makes use of divine worship, and his public appearances before God, as a kind of opiate, to stupify an uneasy conscience, and therefore he has some inclination and willingness to come before God here on earth: but at death, and at the general resurrection, he must appear whether he will or no; Heb. ix. 27. *It is appointed for all men once to die, and after death the judgment;* Rom. xiv. 10. and 2 Cor. v. 10. *We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. The angels shall gather the elect* from the four quarters of the world, and bring them near to the judge with pleasure; but sinners shall be dragged toward that awful tribunal, and be forced to abide the trial.

While the believer, who walks in lively faith, says, When shall I come into that world of spirits, and appear there before God? the sinner wishes that day may never come: O that I might live for ever on earth! that I might for ever converse with men, and never see the face of that God who hates me, and whom I have never loved. O that death might make an utter end of me! O that the grave would cover me for ever, that I might rise no more." And when that dreadful day comes, then, "Fall on us, rocks; then, mountains press us down, and conceal us for ever from the wrath of God and the Lamb; as in Rev. vi. 15, 16. that outcry is represented. But they must stand and see the terror; they are constrained to hear the glorious and dreadful sentence, Dost thou believe this, O my soul! and canst thou be content to live unprepared for the solemnities of this day?

2. Here sinners appear like the saints of God in disguise; but there as sinners, openly guilty, and exposed to light: Here not separated from the saints in the place of worship, there sufficiently distinguished and divided from all who love God, and that worship him in spirit: For when a sinful soul goes out of the body to appear before God, every angel in heaven knows him; he is naked without a covering of disguise, as well as without the covering of a justifying righteousness; and upon this account

he appears all guilty, not only before the searching eye of God, and the terror of his anger, but also before the blessed spirits who are near the throne. Here those who are in the same assembly, know not whether we are the children of God, or *the children of the devil*; but in the world of spirits, all the children of Satan are as much distinguished from the children of God as an angel of light is from a spirit of darkness.

This flesh is a disguise to the soul, a thick cloud to cover a thousand hypocrisies; but at the great day the naked soul must be known; *All nations shall be gathered before him, and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats;* Mat. xxv. 32. Jesus shall separate the one from the other; and what will the sinner say at that day? "I have on earth appeared before God among the saints, but now I must for ever dwell with my companions in iniquity, with my partners in *everlasting burnings*; I am so like to the spirits of hell, now I am undressed, and divested of all disguise, that I see myself justly divided for ever from the saints, and a fit companion for none but devils." O who can tell the torment that is contained in such a self-condemning reflection as this?

3. Sinners appear now, and take no notice of God as Creator, or Christ as Mediator and Saviour; but at the appearance in judgment it will be impossible to stand before God, and not take notice of him. He appears there as a God of terrible and incensed majesty, and they must see him; and Jesus Christ sits there, and must be seen, not as the Saviour to secure them, but the judge ready to condemn them to everlasting punishment; *Rev.* i. 7. assures of this day, and speaks of it as already come: *Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. I shall behold him,* says the wretched Balaam, *but not nigh;* Num. xviv. 17. not as my God, near me, but as my enemy, afar from me. "Now God speaks with the voice of mercy in the church, and I turn a deaf ear to him, may the sinner say, but then it is the language of justice and vengeance: O that my ears and my eyes were sealed up for ever: for his looks, his words, his actions, smite my soul through with a thousand torments."

It is impossible for the wicked to turn their eyes from God in that day, whereas now for a whole hour or two, in his worship, their hearts are not once fixed upon him. A God of holiness will be seen on his seat of judgment; and the sinner who *will not see, shall see,* and be confounded at the sight. Think of this, O my soul! and when thou findest thy thoughts wandering from God in the next duty of worship, take this awful hint to recal them again.

4. Now the sinner appears before God as on a throne of grace; there on a throne of justice: now in a state of trial: there for a final sentence. He comes now to hear the general language of God to men; there to hear his own particular judgment from the same God; now the sinner stands in the church, in a general assembly: and he stands within the reach of a general promise: *He that believes shall be saved; he that confesses, and forsakes his sin shall find mercy:* But then the book of all the promises is for ever shut, and it is declared by the Judge, that not one of them belongs to him: He hath refused all the offers of grace, and the day of grace is gone for ever.

Now he stands, and hears the general threatening of the word: *The soul that sinneth shall die; the wages of sin is death: he that believeth not shall be damned; he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption:* Yet he may escape all these threatenings. But in the great and last day he hears his own name, as it were, read together with each of these threatenings, and united to them all: "Thou art the impenitent sinner, and thou must die for ever? thou hast not believed in Christ: and thou art the person who shall be for ever damned."

Now he appears before God, and though he is, as to his state; at a distance from him, yet he may be converted and brought near; he hears these blessed words; *Mat.* xi. 28. *Come all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.* Is. xlv. 22. *Look unto me, ye that are at the ends of the earth,* and in immediate danger of hell, *and be ye saved.* But there the only word is, *depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire*; for I have not one word of promise, of encouragement, or of comfort for you.

Because he appears now in a state of trial, it is with some hope of obtaining pardon; but there he stands only waiting for the sentence of death, and therefore with everlasting despair: He appears there guilty in open light, and his condemnation is certain and unchangeable.

Believe this, sinner, now in this life; the wrath of God lies heavy upon you; *John* iii. 36. but this wrath may be removed; the condemnation that is now upon you from the law, may be reversed: the gospel is ready to take it off, if you receive this gospel: But there, before the judgment seat, every soul who is found in his sins, falls under an eternal curse, and without repeal: that condemnation shall never be removed; for immediate execution follows upon the sentence. Now the sinner appears before God, and hears such words of compassion as these are: "I delight not *in the death of a sinner,* I would have him *turn and live*; I propose the method of reconciliation and life;" But then the Lord sits upon a throne of judgment, and he shall laugh at the calamity of the wicked, and the obstinate sinner's

distress; for pity and compassion are for ever hid from his eyes. Now, who is there among us able to bear the sight of a provoked God, who is infinite in power, terrible in majesty, and has abandoned all compassion.

5. The sinner now appears often before God; there but once, and is for ever driven from his presence: Here, if you meet with no comfort from God in one ordinance, you may find it in the next; but then you shall be *punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power*; 2 Thess. i. 9. How will you long for such seasons again, when you are for ever shut out from them? "O that I had but one Lord's-day more to spend in the service of God! how would I labour and wrestle with God in prayer, that I might become a new creature!" But in hell the days are all alike, they are all dark and stormy; there is not one day of sunshine, not one sabbath, not one hour of rest. "How did I mock God on earth, must the sinner say, when I appeared before him! and after I had mocked him once, I trifled again and again; but now I find he is a God who will not be mocked; I see he is a terrible majesty, and I am driven for ever from all his grace and compassion, and shall see his face no more."

Use. All the use I shall make of this head, is only to urge upon your minds a practical belief, and a lively sense of this appearance before God at judgment. Must we all stand *before the judgment seat of Christ?* Do we think we are ready? What answer do our own consciences give, when we make that enquiry? Am I prepared to appear before God the Judge? Have I but little hope, and yet can I satisfy myself to lie down at night, and arise in the morning, and have this hope not increased? Have I so little expectation of my appearing well there, and yet rest contented under it?

Do I worship now with that sincerity and devotion, as those who must hereafter come to be judged? Could we, dare we, indulge ourselves in the neglect of any duty, or commission of any sin, or careless performance of the religious services we owe to God, at the rate we now do, had this great appearance before God at judgment been often upon our thoughts? Alas! these things vanish from our minds, many times, together with the breath and air that forms the words: Business, or cares, or the diversions of this life, turn away the soul from God and judgment, We dwell in flesh, we see not God, and we are ready, foolishly, to imagine that we shall never see him: We thrust this hour at such a distance, as though it would never come; we put it afar off as an evil day.

But let us stand still here, and consider a little: This evening we are come to appear before God in worship; we see our-

selves here, and see each other; we are sure it is a reality, and not a dream; yet seven years ago, this evening was at so vast a distance from us, that we scarce knew how to realize it to our thoughts, and make it, as it were, present: but now all that long distance is vanished, and this evening is come; those days are all passed, and this hour is upon us. Thus it is in the case of death and judgment. Seven years hence, it is most likely, some one or more of us, and perhaps every one of us, shall appear before the bar of God our Judge; that appointed hour will come however it seem afar off now; and then it will be as real an appearance as this present hour is, but a much more solemn one: we shall see and feel ourselves there, and know it is not a dream, but an awful reality.

Consider further, that it can be but a few seven years more, before every one of us must certainly appear at the judgment-seat of God; and as long as these years seem now, yet they will quickly fly away, and the last hour will be upon us.—Think how many of your acquaintance, in seven years past, have made their appearance before God, have past their final trial, and received their everlasting sentence: And each of us may say, "Why should not I be the next? What is there in my nature, or in my circumstances that can secure me against the summons of death and judgment?" It may be but a few days before we are called; and is every one of us here ready? This is a question of infinite importance, and let us not give rest to our souls, till we can answer it to our satisfaction.

O how should we live! how should we act! how should we speak! how should we worship! if this were always upon our hearts? O that we could but realize these awful things to our minds, and make them more familiar to our thoughts daily! Could sinners then be one day contented without converting grace, and without a justifying righteousness? Could they any longer refuse the mercy of the gospel, and Jesus the Saviour? Could they be satisfied to appear all guilty before God, and no friend there to speak for them? no intercessor to plead for them? none to undertake their cause? Could they go on to sin with a negligent mind, if they thought the judgment-door just opening upon them, and Jesus Christ at hand? Could it be possible we should have such cold and lazy desires after a Saviour and his salvation, if we thought our everlasting happiness or misery depended upon the next day, the next hour, or the next moment? For we know not how soon the summons may come, and state us before his tribunal.

II. The *second* part of my discourse leads me to consider the blessed difference that there shall be between a christian's appearing before God in heaven, and his appearance here in divine

ordinances before God on earth? and by a comparison of these two, may the Spirit of God awaken our faith, our hope, our love, and our joy, and all join to promote our sanctification! The differences then between our standing before God in worship now, and our worshipping before God in heaven, are such as these:

1. Now the true christian appears in a mixed assembly of saints and sinners: there the assembly is all holy, and not one sinner amongst them. Here sincere souls and hypocrites meet together in worship; there the hypocrite is for ever banished. In the houses of God on earth, the wicked Canaanites will mingle with the children of Israel; but in his temple in heaven, every one is an Israelite indeed; *There shall no more be found a Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts;* Zech. xiv. 21.

The children of God here, are under a veil of infirm and sinful flesh, and in the likeness of sinners; there they are unveiled and acknowledged to be *the sons and daughters of the Almighty;* 1 John iii. 1, 2. *Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God! But the world knows us not*; nay, we are not at many times known to ourselves; but when he comes whom we have trusted, then we shall be known and distinguished from the world, as God's only begotten Son; and we shall be known and distinguished as the children of God, all related and a-kin to him:—*When he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is;* 1 John iii. 2. and shall sufficiently be distinguished from all who belong not to Christ.

Here a child of God, in the sanctuary, is deeply humbled at the mention of the name of God; but his humility is not seen. Here his zeal kindles at the proposal of a duty, but it burn swith a hidden flame: Here his love is at work, his hope is arising, his joy is getting up to heaven, when he is engaged in the meditation of a comfortable promise, or some of the blessed privileges of the children of God; while those who are around him, even his next neighbour who sits close to him, knows nothing of the holy workings of his heart, and the breathings of his soul towards God: But there the whole assembly shall worship with one heart, and one soul, and not one wandering worshipper, or one wandering thought in worship.

We are ready to complain here, that we ourselves know not whether we shall be accepted or no; through the weakness of faith, want of holiness, decay of zeal in our spirits, and that degeneracy we sometimes find and feel in ourselves, we are often ready to doubt, and almost upon the borders of despair. This is the case of many a poor, trembling christian; but there every

one shall worship with strength of joy, liveliest delight, and warmest zeal and affections: and be assured his graces are all true, for he shall see them all in the light of glory.

This suspicion or jealousy of ourselves, flattens our devotion many a time here, and takes away the pleasurable sensations of religion, because we ourselves know not whether God accepts us or no: There a full assurance of our being beloved of God, and being for ever accepted of him, shall make every exercise of devotion a most agreeable and perfect pleasure. O my soul, how should it quicken thy race, and exalt thy joy, to think how fast thou art removing from this world of sinners, and from all thy own doubts and fears, to a glorious assembly of holy souls, where not one doubt, or fear shall remain in their consciences, nor in thine!

2. In this world the saint appears among a few to worship his God, but then among millions. Now many times we have worshipped in a secret corner, for fear of men; but then it is all in public glory: for there all the worship that is paid, is the established worship of the whole country; and honours, and kingdoms, and wealth, are all on that side: All the inhabitants are made rich for ever, with the riches of heaven; and all the children of God are the sons and daughters of a king, and all heirs and possessors of glory, and reign together with the Lord Jesus: *Rom.* viii. 17. 2 *Tim.* ii. 12. Here many times the children of God are forced to be separatists from their neighbours and fellow-citizens, they are divided from the multitudes and crouds of mankind, they are but a *little flock*; but there they shall shine in the midst of the *general assembly of the first-born, and a great multitude which no man can number;* Rev. vii. 9. that with victories and songs are for ever addressing the throne of God and the Lamb. O when shall I hear the voice from heaven say, *Come up hither?*

3. Now we worship in a way of preparation; there for enjoyment and full delight. Ordinances here are but slight shadows, and very faint and imperfect resemblances of what the worship in heaven shall be. Now the word of God is spoken by a man, and it loses much of the divinity and power, by the means of conveyance; there it will be spoken by God himself to our spirits, or by our Lord Jesus Christ, to the ears of our bodies, raised, sanctified, and immortal; and our souls shall receive as much of the express ideas, as God designs to convey by all his conversation with that sanctified number: nor shall they miss of any of the beauty, or spirit, or perfection, of those thoughts which God himself would impress upon us.

Now in the letters of the bible we read the good-will and mercy of God to sinners; but there, in a far brighter manner of

onveyance, *in thy light shall we see light*; Ps. xxxvi. 9. Here ve seek the Father and the Son; the one as our happiness, the ther as the way to the enjoyment of that happiness, as they are isually represented in the word of God: There we shall say, We ave *found him whom our souls desire* and love, and shall be for ver happy in his presence. Our business now in this world is to et a right temper and frame: there to practise and indulge the ay. Happy souls, who are thus prepared in the outer courts to raw nigh and worship *within the veil!*

Now we appear with imperfect services, and poor improvenents, there with glorious and complete worship: For here *we ee God but as in a glass darkly*; there *face to face*; 1 Cor. xiii. 2. Now we can have his glory, or his grace represented to us ut in part, in a small measure, and according to our poor capaities of receiving; there *we shall see him as he is, and know as we re known.*

What are our prayers, what are our praises here? our praies when offered up in a song, or in plainer language, in compaison with those that are paid to God above? Now we speak of im *whom we have not seen*, therefore we speak in so imperfect a nanner: There we shall hear and speak of him whom we see or know more intimately: Now we appear before God, and bring too much of the world with us; there we *leave the world and go to the Father*, God and Christ are too much forgotten, or they are too often thrust out of our minds by vain thoughts, even when we ourselves are never so desirous to spend an hour or two with God; what interruptions do we find? What long blanks divide the several petitions of our prayer, and break off the meditation while we stand before God to worship him? We have many enemies within and without, who stand ready to seize away our souls from God, and to rob him of our devotion: Vain fancies call us aside, and our senses turn off our minds from heaven. There shall be everlasting worship above, without one impertinence interposing; no trifles there to divert us, and separate one part of our worship from the other: there all the powers and faculties of nature shall perpetually be engaged in the business and blessedness of that state. Glorious worship, and blessed worshippers! fit for the presence of the Majesty of heaven.

5. I might say, We come with very little comfort, and many discouragements, to appear before God on earth; but there with everlasting consolation. We come now to the word, and we go away again, hardly hearing the voice of God in his word or seeing his countenance, but there we shall be for ever near him; no wall of flesh, or of sin to divide us.

Now we are defiled with guilt, and ashamed to lift up our

faces towards heaven, and blush even when our hearts are never so sincere; but there we shall come near to God, even to God in glory, and not be afraid of him; there we shall see a God undefiled, ourselves also being undefiled; a God of spotless purity, and ourselves without blemish *before the throne;* our *garments washed* white *in the blood of the Lamb,* and never, never to be defiled again; that is the glory and pleasure of a christian. Then we shall appear *without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing;* without guile in our mouths, or vanity in our hearts; *without fault before God,* and therefore without pain; without sorrow, and without fear for ever, even though we stand before God in all his majesty; for we are assured of his mercy. Now we worship with prayers and tears, because of many and heavy burdens, sorrows and sins; but *then with everlasting songs and joy on our heads;* Is. xxxv. 10. If we had a painful and living sense of these things, of the wanderings, temptations, burdens, and defilements, that mingle with our worship here, we should cry aloud, and say, *How long, O Lord, how long?*

6. *Lastly,* Now we appear and depart again, but then we shall abide with God for ever. Now we go down from the mount of converse with God, into the world of temptation, and sin, and business, and care: We appear upon mount Horeb, or Pisgah, and we take a little view of the promised land: but we go down again as the children of Israel did, to fight with the Canaanites, the giants that are in the valley, our mighty sins, our strong corruptions. In this valley of tears we must have a conflict before we get to the promised land; there every worshipper has in his hand a palm of complete victory; *Rev.* vii. 9. and he is for ever discharged from fighting: *Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God; and he shall go no more out*; Rev. iii. 12. So necessary is the presence of the saints in heaven, that our Lord Jesus Christ has represented them as pillars of that building. God dwelling in the midst of his saints, counts himself dwelling in one of his glorious heavens: and every saint there is, as it were, a pillar, and a support of it: We are *lively stones* in that building in which God will for ever inhabit. Now we come to the house of God as visitants; but there as inhabitants, as the *children* of God, who *abide for ever in the house*: There every saint obtains what holy David wished for, and that in the literal perfection of it, that he might *dwell in the house of the Lord for ever;* Ps. xxvii. 4. and xxiii. 6.

Use. The only reflection I shall make on the second part of my discourse, is this, that we should raise our hope, our consolation, and our joy, by a meditation of such future worship in heaven as this is, when we lie under many weaknesses, restraints, and defilements, in our best worship on earth. O! how would

this hope rejoice our hearts, if we could but live upon it! What secret comfort would it be to a poor humble soul, who is hindered from drawing near to God in worship now, because his affections are perpetually ready to wander, to think that he shall come and appear before God hereafter, and see him without ceasing, and his thoughts shall never wander from his God. When he complains under the temptations of Satan, and absence of God from his ordinances, what a pleasure to think he is going above to worship at the *general assembly*, where Satan never enters, and where God never conceals himself; but appears universally gracious, and without a frown; where the God of glory and mercy appears unchangeably, and for ever the same.

Those of us who have been long restrained from all the pleasure and profit of public ordinances, what a blessed release will it be to our souls, when we shall be dismissed from the bonds of flesh, into that great and holy society of spirits, and shall feel no more restraints for ever? We who have been detained from the house of God, by the uncharitable laws of men, or the painful providence of God, with what a divine relish shall we embrace our liberty in that day, and be eternally free from all forbidding laws, and all imprisoning providences?

O how heartily should it engage our affections to one another, and increase the pleasure of our worship, when we come to wait on God together here below, to think that we shall worship God together in the upper world? How should it unite the hearts of our congregations one to another in divine love and make christians for ever forbear wrath and anger here, since they must be everlasting fellow-worshippers above?

What a glorious joy will it be to you who are the heads and rulers of this family, who have so often joined in sweet devotion here on earth, when you shall meet each other there, and worship together before the throne in heaven? What a mutual endearment, and mutual delight does such a prospect raise between the nearest relations? How doth it exalt the sweetest passion, heighten and refine the warmest love? What a blessed transport will it be to the parents, to find their children there engaged in the same work? And what a joyful meeting will it be to you, the children, the hopeful offspring of this house, to find each other in that company, and to see your pious parents with you? With what a glorious and unspeakable joy shall parents render up their accounts to God in this language, "*Lord here am I, and the children that thou hast given me;*" imitating the words of the Lord Jesus, giving up his account to his Father; Heb. ii. 13.

How will our gladness increase, and our souls enlarge themselves in holy joy, to behold our christian friends, and our dear

relatives, standing in the same assembly, as fellow-worshippers at the throne? How will the heads of this family rejoice, if their whole household should be found there, whom they have endeavoured to encourage in their way to heaven, by a religious care to maintain household worship? how will the joy of faithful ministers be advanced by every one of their hearers, whom they shall find in that blessed church above? *Ye are our crown, and our glory, and our rejoicing in that day;* 1 Thess. ii. 19, 20.

Now should not each of us maintain a holy jealousy within ourselves, and say, "Which of us shall be missing?" May not every one of us so far suspect ourselves, as to say, '*Lord is it I?*' Shall I be wanting there, when all the rest of this little assembly shall be worshipping with the saints in heaven? Shall I be separated from them with whom I have so often appeared before God, and bowed the knee together on earth? O dreadful thought of overwhelming sorrow! Which of us all has so much stupidity, or such impious courage, as to bear the terrible apprehension? To be divided for ever from the family of God, and shut out of his upper sanctuary! O may these words make a proper impression on every heart, to keep our jealousy awake, and spur us onward in our christian course of duty and devotion! May such thoughts as these excite us to *give all diligence, to make our calling and election sure,* and in every act of worship here in this world, to get some clearer evidence of an interest in the favour of God, some further meetness for glory; that when the great assembly shall join together in that heavenly worship, we may assist with our praises, and mingle our joy with theirs. *Amen.*

HYMN FOR SERMONS XIII. and XIV.

Appearance before God here and hereafter.

WHILE I am banish'd from thy house,
I mourn in secret, Lord:
"When shall I come, and pay my vows,
"And hear thy holy word?"

So while I dwell in bonds of clay,
Methinks my soul shall groan,
"When shall I wing my heavenly way,
"And stand before thy throne?"

I love to see my Lord below,
His church displays his grace;
But upper worlds his glory know,
And view him face to face.

I love to worship at his feet,
Though sin attack me there;
But saints exalted near his seat,
Have no assaults to fear.

I'm pleas'd to meet him in his court,
And taste his heavenly love;
But still I think his visits short,
Or I too soon remove.

He shines, and I am all delight,
He hides, and all is pain:
When will he fix me in his sight,
And ne'er depart again?

SERMON XV.

l Rational Defence of the Gospel: Or, Courage in professing Christianity.

om. i. 16.——I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.

THE FIRST PART.

SHAME is a very discouraging passion of the mind; it sinks ie spirits low, it enfeebles all the active powers, and forbids the igorous execution of any thing whereof we are ashamed. It as necessary therefore, that St. Paul should be endued with acred courage, and raised above the power of shame, when he, as sent to preach the gospel of Christ among the Jews or the eathens, to face an infidel world, and to break through all the eproaches and terrors of it. *I am a debtor*, saith he, *verse* 14, *o the Greeks and to the Barbarians;* that is, to the learned and he unlearned nations; *to the wise and to the unwise:* I have a ommission from Christ to publish his gospel among all the nations f men, and I esteem myself their debtor, till I have delivered ny message: And though Rome be the seat of wordly power nd policy, the mistress of the nations, and sovereign of the arth, where I shall meet with opposition and contempt in abunlance, yet I have courage enough to preach this doctrine at Rome lso, *for I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.*

My friends, this is an age wherein the gospel of our Releemer meets with much contempt and opposition. There are nany in a baptized nation, and who have been brought up in the hristian belief and worship, that begin to be weary of Christ and his religion; they are endeavouring to find blemishes and defects in this sacred gospel, and in that blessed word of God that reveals this grace to us. The divine truths, that belong to this gospel, meet with mockery and profane reproach from deists and unbelievers. I may call it therefore a day of rebuke and blasphemy. God grant we may never become a land of heathens again! Those f us that believe this gospel from the heart, have need of couage to maintain our profession of it, especially in some compaies and conversations. We should prepare ourselves to encounter the false reasonings of unbelievers, as well as harden our aces against their ridicule. Let us therefore meditate this sa-

cred text, that each of us may pronounce boldly the words of this great apostle, *I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.*

Now, that our meditations may proceed regularly on the present theme of discourse, let us consider,

I. What the gospel of Christ is, that we may not mistake it. —II. What is included in this expression, I am not ashamed of it.—III. What there is in this gospel that might be supposed any way to expose a man to shame; and I shall take occasion under this head to give particular answers to some of the most important objections that might be made against the gospel, and shew that there is no just reason to be ashamed of it.—IV. I shall consider what is that general answer to all objections; that universal guard against sinful shame which is contained in my text, and which will bear out every christian in his faith and profession of the gospel of Christ, *viz.* that it is the power of God to the salvation of every one who believes.—And, V. I shall draw some proper inferences.

First, What is the gospel of Christ?

I answer in general, It is a revelation of the grace of God to fallen man through a Mediator. Or, It is a gracious constitution of God for the recovery of sinful and miserable man, from that deplorable state into which sin had brought him, by the meditation of Christ: Or, in the words of my text, it is the power of God, or his powerful appointment, for the salvation of every one who believes. The word gospel, in the original, εὐαγγέλιον signifies good news, or glad tidings. And surely, when a sinner who is exposed to the wrath of God, is sensible of his guilt and danger it must needs be glad tidings to him to hear of a way of salvation and an all-sufficient Saviour. This constitution of God for our salvation has had various editions, if I may so express it, or gradual discoveries of it made to mankind, ever since Adam first sinned, and God visited him with the first promise of grace before he turned him out of paradise. But the last and most complete revelation of this gospel was made by the personal ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ, and more especially by his apostles when his own death, resurrection, and exaltation had laid the complete foundation for it. From the books of the New Testament therefore we may derive this larger description of the gospel of Christ.

It is a wise, a holy, and gracious constitution of God for the recovery of sinful man, by sending his own Son Jesus Christ into the flesh, to obey his laws which man had broken, to make a proper atonement for sin by his death, and thus to procure the favour of God, and eternal happiness for all that believe and repent, and receive the offered salvation; together with a promise of the Holy Spirit to work this faith and repentance in their hearts

to renew their sinful natures into holiness, to form them on earth fit for this happiness, and to bring them to the full possession of it in heaven.

It might be proved that this is the sense and substance of the gospel of Christ from many of the prophecies of the Old Testament, and the ceremonies and figures of the Jewish church, as well as from a variety of citations from the writings of the evangelists and apostles: Yet there have risen some persons, I mean the Socinians and their disciples, in the last age and in this also, who call themselves christians, but they also curtail and diminish the gospel of Christ, as to make it signify very little more than the dictates and hopes of the light of nature, *viz.* "That if we repent of our sins past, and obey the commands of God as well as we can for the future, Christ as a great prophet, has made a full declaration that there is pardon for such sinners, and they shall be accepted unto eternal life:" and all this without any dependance on his death as a proper sacrifice, and with little regard to the operations of his Holy Spirit.

Now I need use no other argument to refute this mistaken notion of the gospel, than what may be derived from the words of my text, *viz.* that St. Paul expresses it with a sort of emphasis, and as a matter of importance, that he was *not ashamed of the gospel of Christ:* Whereas if this had been all the substance of the gospel, he had no reason to be ashamed of it either among the Jews or the heathens. The Jews had a knowledge of forgiveness upon repentance, and a belief of it long before Christ came: And the heathen philosophers would have readily received it, as a thing very little different from what their natural reason might lead them to hope for: though it could not fully assure them of it: They would never have sought to expose and ridicule the preaching of St. Paul as mere babbling, and called him *a setter forth of strange gods.*

But on the other hand, if we suppose him publishing the glorious doctrine which I have described, there was something in this so strange to the ears of the heathens, as well as of the blinded Jews, that might well be supposed to awaken their opposition and rage; and therefore it was a great point gained with him, when he had courage enough to maintain such a gospel, and to say, I am not ashamed of it.

This leads me to the second thing proposed.

Secondly, What is included in these words, I am not ashamed of the gospel? To this I answer under these five heads:

1. I am not ashamed to believe it as a man.—2. I am not ashamed to profess it as a christian.—3. I am not ashamed to preach it to others as a minister.—4. I am not ashamed to defend it, and contend for it as a good soldier of Christ.—5. I am not ashamed to suffer and die for it as a martyr.

1. I am not ashamed to believe this gospel as a man. My rational powers give me no secret reproaches. My understanding and judgment do not reprove and check my faith. I feel no inward blush upon the face of my soul, while I give the fullest assent to all these truths, to this scheme of doctrine, to this heavenly contrivance and system of grace. A rational man, especially who has been bred up in learning, should be ashamed to believe fables and follies, but I believe all this gospel and am not ashamed. My own reason approves it, and justifies me in the persuasion and belief of such a gospel as this is. I believe it with so firm and unshaken a faith, that I venture all my own eternal concerns upon it. I lay all the stress of my hopes of a blessed immortality on it. My soul rests here, and I am not ashamed of my resting-place: I am not ashamed of my Saviour, and the method of his salvation. I am persuaded my hopes shall never disappoint me. Surely, if the gospel had been so very irrational a thing, as some men pretend it to be, St. Paul, being so rational and wise a man, would have been ashamed to believe it. But I believe it, says he, and am not ashamed. I do not think it casts any just reflection upon my rational capacities, or my learned education at the feet of Gamaliel, for me to give a full assent to this gospel.

2. I am not ashamed to profess it as a christian. I am ready to tell the world that I believe it, and I take all occasions to let the world know it. I am coming to profess this gospel at Rome, and am not ashamed: I have owned it before my own countrymen the Jews already, where it has been most reproached. I have been telling the Gentiles what the gospel of salvation is, and I long to see you at Rome, that I may tell you what my belief is in the gospel, and may hear how far you have believed, and may be *comforted by the mutual faith both of you and me;* Rom. i. 12. I shall be glad to tell you what doctrines I venture my own soul upon, and shall be willing to hear from you whether you venture you souls upon the same doctrine, or no; and shall rejoice to find we are both interested in one salvation.

3. I am not ashamed to preach it to others as a minister, that is, to invite others to believe it. It is a communicable good, and I am sent to diffuse it, nor am I ashamed of my commission. See 2 Tim. i. 12, 13. *Our Lord Jesus Christ has abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light by the gospel,* and has appointed me a preacher, and an apostle to the gentiles: I preach the gospel, and *am not ashamed,* though I have suffered for it. I venture my soul upon it unto the last great day, and I bid thee, Timothy, as a preacher unto others, *to hold fast the same form of sound words which thou hast learned of me.* I long to teach

the whole world this faith and this doctrine, therefore *I am a debtor to the Greeks and barbarians;* I would make others partakers of the same hope. *Would to God, that not only thou, Agrippa, but all those that hear me, were not only almost, but altogether such as I am, except only these bonds, these sufferings* which I endure for Christ's sake; *Acts* xxvi. 22.

4. I am not ashamed to contend for it as *a good soldier of Christ;* to defend it when it is attacked, and to vindicate the cause of my Lord and Master. Where it is assaulted I endeavour to secure it, though with many reproaches from the carnal prejudices of mankind. I oppose them all; for they oppose my Saviour and his cross, and I build my everlasting hopes there. *I am set for the defence of the gospel of Christ;* Phil. 1. 17. and I will *contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints;* Jude ver. 3. And he gave us an instance of it, that when Peter, who was an apostle, seemed to diminish some of the glory and the liberty of the gospel, he *withstood him to the face;* Gal. ii. 11. "There shall no man silence me, or stop my mouth, when I am preaching a crucified Saviour, and when I express my faith in the liberty and latitude of the gospel of Christ. For if I durst withstand an apostle under his criminal concealments, and in his diminution of the honour of this doctrine, surely I dare oppose all the world besides."

5. *Lastly,* I am not ashamed to suffer and die for it as a martyr. Load me with reproaches, ye Jews, my countrymen, and load me with chains, ye magistrates of Rome; of none of these am I ashamed or afraid, but with all boldness I am always ready that Christ should be magnified in my life, or my death; *Phil.* i. 14, 20. And as for my friends that are full of sorrow lest Paul should be sacrificed for the faith of Christ, What mourn ye, and break my heart for? *I am not only ready to be bound, but to die for the sake of Christ. I count nothing dear to me, no nor my life precious to myself, that I may finish with joy the course of my ministry of this gospel, that I may testify the grace of my God;* Acts xx. 24. and xxi. 13.

I might add also, that St. Paul intends and means more than he expresses by a very usual figure of speech: I am not ashamed of it, that is, I glory in it, I make my boast of it. If there be any doctrine worth boasting of, it is the gospel of Christ. If I have any profession to glory in, it is that I am a christian. Once I was a pharisee, and I counted it my gain and my honour; *Phil.* iii. 7, 8. *But what things were gain to me, these I counted loss for Christ; yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.* I glory in being a minister of the gospel; it is the highest honour God could have put upon me, who am less than the least of

all saints. *To me is this grace given to preach among the gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;* Eph. iii. 8. I glory in it to that degree, that I am dead to all things else. *God forbid I should glory in any thing save in the cross of our Lord Jesus, whereby the world is crucified to me, and I to the world;* Gal. vi. 14. I glory in my sufferings: and, my friends, if ye understood the value of these things, they are your glory too. *If I am offered up a sacrifice for the service of your faith; I joy and rejoice together with all;* Phill. ii. 17. O! that you would but rejoice together with me in it. Thus I have shewed you that all these things are implied in St. Paul's not being ashamed of the gospel of Christ, and I have proved it to you from other parts of his epistles.

The third general head I proposed to speak to, was this; What is there in this gospel that may be supposed to expose any man to shame! And this question is very needful; for if there were nothing in it that men might take occasion to throw their scandals and reproaches at, it had been no great matter for St. Paul to have cried out, I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.

To this I answer in general, this was a gospel that contradicted the rooted prejudices of the Jews, and was severely reproached by those that professed great knowledge in their law; it was also a new and strange thing to the Gentiles. *A crucified Christ was a stumbling-block to the Jews, and foolishness to the Greeks;* 1 Cor. i. 23. There was something in the faith, and practice, and worship of the gospel so contrary to the course of their education in the world, so opposite to their carnal inclinations, and to the customs and fashions of their country, that a man might well be afraid and ashamed to profess it, when they lift their tongues, and their hands, and their swords against it, and the chief of them *crucified the Lord of glory,* and put the preachers of it to death.

Thus in general. But while I descend to particulars, I shall confine myself only to those occasions of shame, which the same gospel meets with in our day, that so the discourse may be more useful, to the present audience; and as I mention each objection or supposed occasion of shame, I shall endeavour to take off the force of it, and shew that it is unreasonable.

Now the things that might any ways be supposed to expose this gospel to shame, may be ranked under these two heads:—

I. Those which arise from the doctrines of the gospel: And,
II.—Those which arise from the professors of the gospel.

First, The occasions of shame that arise from the doctrines of the gospel, are these five that follow:

I. That there are mysteries in it which are above the powers of our reason to comprehend, and I will never believe a gospel that I cannot comprehend. This is the language of Socinians, men that have pretended so much to reason in our day.

But to relieve this occasion of shame, let us consider that mysteries are of two sorts.

First, Such as we should never have known but by divine revelation; but being once revealed, they may be fairly explained and understood. Such is the doctrine of the satisfaction of Christ, of the resurrection of the dead, of the forgiveness of sins for the sake of Christ's sufferings, and of eternal life in a future world. I say, these are all mysteries that were hid from ages, that is, they are such truths which nature or reason could not have found out of itself, but being once revealed to us of God, may be fairly explained and well understood. Other sort of mysteries are those, which when revealed unto us, we know merely the existence, or reality and certainty of them, but cannot comprehend the mode and manner how they are. And of this kind there are but two that I know of which are peculiar to our religion, and which are the chief objects of offence to some men. These are the mysteries of the blessed Trinity, and the mystery of the incarnation of Christ. The mystery of Three, whom the scripture describes as persons, who have some glorious communion in one godhead! and the mystery of two natures united in one person.

Now, though the way and manner how the three persons, Father, Son, and Spirit, should be one God, and how two natures, human and divine, should be one person in Christ Jesus; I say, though the way and manner how these things are, is not so easy to be explained and unfolded by us, and above our own present capacity to comprehend and fully to explain, yet I could never find these things proved impossible to be. If I must refuse to believe a thing that I know not the manner and nature of, there are many things in the world of nature, and in natural religion, that I must disbelieve. Let them explain to me in natural religion what is the eternity of God, what ideas they can have of a being that never began to be; and then perhaps I may be able to explain to them how three persons can have communion in one godhead, and how two natures can be one in person. I am well assured, there are some doctrines in natural religion as difficult to be explained, and hard to be understood, and the manner of them is as mysterious, as these doctrines of revealed religion, which are also rendered more offensive to the thinking mind, by some men's attempts to explain them in an unhappy manner.

But we may go a step lower to meet this objection, and con-

found it. In the world of nature there are mysteries of this kind, which are as unaccountable and as hard to be unfolded as the mysteries of grace. It is the doctrine of union both in the trinity and the incarnation, which renders them so mysterious. Now this doctrine of unions in natural philosophy hath been hitherto insolvable. We know that spirit and body are united to make a man: But the manner how they are united, remains still a most difficult question. We know that some bodies are hard, and some are soft; but what it is that ties or unites hard bodies so closely together, and makes them so difficult to be separated, is a riddle to the best philosophers, which they cannot solve; or what it is that renders the parts of soft bodies so easily separable. And many other things there are in nature as mysterious as this.

Besides, if it were possible for us to explain all things in nature, and to write a perfect book of natural philosophy with the most accurate skill, yet it would not follow that we must know God the Creator to perfection. The things of God are infinitely superior to the things of men. The nature of a Creator in his manner of existence is infinitely above the nature of creatures in theirs. It is fit there should be something belonging to God an infinite Spirit, that is incomprehensible, and above the power of finite spirits to comprehend, and fully search out and explain. It ought therefore to be no just ground of shame to the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, that it has mysteries in it, that is to say, that it has some doctrines in it, which we could never have found out by the mere light of reason; and some truths, the full explication whereof we can never attain to, since there are many things in the world of nature, in the world of bodies and souls, and many things in natural religion, which we cannot fully explain.

II. Another occasion of reproach, which men fasten upon the gospel, is, that some of the doctrines are so singular and contrary to the common opinions and reasonings of men; such as that the ever-blessed God should want a satisfaction, in order to pardon sin with honour; that he should punish the most innocent and obedient man that ever lived, even his own Son, for the sins of wicked and rebellious creatures; that we should be freed from hell, which we had deserved, by the sufferings of another in our stead; that one man should be justified with another's obedience; nay, that ten thousands of men should be pardoned and justified for the sake of the obedience and death of one single man; that all our own repentance is not sufficient of itself to obtain our pardon; and our holiness, be it never so great, does not procure us a title to the favour of God and heaven; that dead bodies, though mouldered in the grave for thousands of years, should be

raised again to life and immortality: These are such strange doctrines, so very foreign to the common sentiments of most men, that some of the Athenians cried out, "*What does this babbler mean?*" A man should be ashamed of these things; the very heathen philosophers called it foolishness.

But now to remove this scandal, let us consider that many of these things are not so contrary to the reason of men as some think: As for the satisfaction made for our sins by the sufferings of Christ, did not almost all the heathen world suppose that God would not pardon sin without satisfaction? What else mean all their bloody sacrifices? And why did they sometimes proceed so far as to murder men, and offer them to God for their sins? I confess indeed, that many of the philosophers and learned men amongst them, who derided the gospel of Christ, did also despise the sacrifices and religious ceremonies of their own countrymen, believing that God would be merciful to men that were penitent and pious, without any rites of atonement and sacrifice. But it is as evident also, that the people had a general notion of the necessity of some atonement for sin, and that the more valuable the sacrifice was, the sooner was their god appeased, and the benefit procured would be more extensive, howsoever the philosophers might ridicule it. It is manifest then, that many of the heathens did imagine that the death and sufferings of one person would procure pardon and immunities for a whole multitude. And upon this principle some of the ancient Romans, now and then, out of nobility of spirit, devoted themselves to death, to appease the anger of the gods, for their whole country. Thus it appears, that the business of satisfaction for sin, and the doctrine of expiation and atonement by the blood and death of a surety, was not so utterly unknown in the world.

I add farther, that the notion of one person's making satisfaction for the crime of another in human and political affairs, has been sometimes practised, and thought to be very intelligible; and why should it be counted so very monstrous and absurd in things divine? Do we understand what it is for one man to become a surety for another, or for a criminal to be set free from punishment by the voluntary substitution of another person in his stead? Are we not well acquainted what it is for one man to pay the debt of another, and the original person that was obliged thereby, to become free? Do we not know what it is for a whole family of children to inherit a possession for many ages, one after another, for some noble acts and services of their father? Therefore honour, and glory, and happiness, betowed upon a multitude, for the sake of what one man has done, is not so unintelligible a thing as some men would persuade us. Why should that be esteemed impossible in the affair of religion, which is evident and plainly practicable in the affairs of this world?

Again, they think it strange that our repentance should not be enough to obtain the pardon of past sins, and our own obedience should not procure heaven for us. But are not traitors and robbers, and all notorious criminals punished in all governments, notwithstanding their repentances? Can their sorrow for what is past, procure a pardon of their prince? Who then would be punished? And is man's government in punishing criminals, without a satisfaction, just and reasonable? And shall God's government be counted unreasonable? Can future obedience among men obtain forgiveness for past treason and rebellion? And why then should you think the great God is obliged to accept of it?

As for the resurrection of the dead, though it was counted a strange thing among the heathens, when it was preached to them, yet in these latter days, since the knowledge of God and his glorious attributes has been so much increased, and the reason of men has freely exercised itself upon things divine and human; the resurrection is not counted any impossible thing, nor the doctrine of it incredible. And I am verily persuaded if men, whom God has endued with large capacities and great skill in reasoning, would but employ those talents to write a rational account of most of the doctrines of our Lord Jesus Christ, it might be done with much glory and success.

As for those few doctrines of christianity, which may at first appear less reasonable to men, their abundant attestation from heaven demands our belief.

III. Another occasion of reproach is, that the gospel teaches mortification and self-denial in a very great degree, conflicting with our natural appetites, and fighting against our own flesh and blood: And all that it promises is an unseen heaven, a future reward, a far distant happiness in another country, which eye has not seen, nor ear heard of, nor the heart of man conceived. A mere spiritual pleasure, that is to be enjoyed by the mind, and which the body shall not taste of, till perhaps after a thousand years or more. Now, as under the former head, the doctrines of the gospel are a scandal to the men of reasoning, so under this they become a scandal and reproach to those that are literally called men of sense, who are carnalized and immersed in sensuality. They think it strange to forego the joys of sense for the hopes of enjoying a happiness in a world they do not know when or where.

But I need not stand long to answer this calumny; for even some of the refined philosophers gave sufficient rebuke to this sensual temper: The very heathens could say enough to abate this censure, and to remove this occasion of shame, though the gospel of Christ does it infinitely better.

Christianity does not abridge us of the common comforts of flesh and blood, nor lay an unreasonable restraint upon any natural appetite; but it teaches us to live like men, and not like brutes; to regulate and manage our animal nature with its desires and inclinations, so as to enjoy life in the most proper and becoming manner; to eat and drink, and taste the bounties of providence, to the honour of our Creator, and to the best interest of our souls.

But, suppose, we were forbid all the indulgence of our appetites, and the delights of sense, by the gospel; surely, those who know what intellectual pleasures are, who can relish the joy that belongs to spirits, will not be much terrified with these objections, nor deride the faith of Christ, because it does not propose to them the reward of an earthly paradise. The rewards of the gospel are indeed spiritual till the resurrection, but those spiritual pleasures shall vastly over-balance all that toil, sorrow and suffering, we have passed through on earth, and all that self-denial which we have exercised. But when the body shall be raised again, our refined delights of all kinds shall be infinitely satisfying: We shall not say, that God has dealt our happiness to us with a niggardly hand, but that he has exceeded all his promises, when we shall come to taste the things God has prepared for us, which eye hath not seen, or ear heard of.

IV. Another prejudice against the gospel is this; some persons charge it with much of enthusiasm; and that the doctrine of the operations of the Spirit, and the expectation of his divine assistance to instruct us in truth, to mortify sin in us, and to enable us to perform holy duties, has too much of a visionary and fanciful turn of mind, and does not become men that profess reason.

But if such objectors were better acquainted with themselves, and knew the weakness of their own reason in the search after truth, and the various and plausible errors that attend their enquiries on every side; if they were better acquainted with the strength of temptation, the power of their own sinful appetites, and the weakness of their will to resist sin, and to fulfil the rules of righteousness: surely they would not think it a ridiculous thing to lift up a prayer to the great God to guide them into truth, and to assist them to walk steadily in the paths of religion and virtue. If they had but a deep and lively sense of their own insufficiency for every thing that is good, and of the many dangers and enemies that beset them, they would rather see infinite reason to bless their Creator, that has given them any promise or hope of the aids of his grace.

Nor is it at all fantastical or irrational to suppose, that the great and blessed God, who made these spirits of ours, should

kindly act upon them, and influence them by secret and divine methods to their duty and their happiness; that he should send his own Spirit to help them onward in their proper business, which is to serve him here; and assist them in the pursuit of their true blessedness, which is, to enjoy him hereafter.

Methinks it is one of the glories of the gospel of Christ, that God has not only sent his Son to purchase heaven for us, but continually sends down his own Spirit to lead every humble christian in the way thither. When a poor penitent creature, distressed under a sense of the power of sin, dwelling in him, who has long and often toiled and laboured to bring his heart near to God, and to suppress the irregular and exorbitant appetites of his nature, addresses himself to the throne of God, and cries earnestly for divine help, it is a glorious provision that is made in the gospel of Christ, that the Spirit of God is promised for our assistance. Nor is it at all unworthy of a person of the greatest reason and the best understanding, humbly to wait and hope for the accomplishment of this promise. Thus the charge of enthusiasm vanishes, and the gospel maintains its honour.

V. The last objection against the doctrines of the gospel of Christ, is, that they are not sufficiently attested, that there is not ground enough given to credit the divinity of them in our age. They are ready to say, "These things were done, according as ourselves profess, above sixteen hundred years ago, and we have not sufficient credentials to venture our faith upon it at this day."

It would be too long here to repeat over to you half the grounds we have for faith in this gospel. That there was such a man as Jesus Christ; that he lived at such a time at Jerusalem; that he wrought wondrous works in his own country, is not at all disbelieved by those that profess any reasonable faith in human history. The Jews themselves, who were his greatest enemies, do not deny that he wrought those miracles, which others could not work; but they pretend, that he did it by some magic art, by diabolical charms: and wrought miracles not by the power of God, but by virtue derived from spells and evil spirits. So that the miracles he wrought were not disbelieved and denied, but the heavenly spring of them is impiously perverted and turned downward, as though Christ borrowed his power from hell to transact these affairs. But the holiness and the heavenly temper of the gospel of Christ refutes this accusation. Satan was never known to demolish his own kingdom of ungodliness in such a manner as this. The gospel of Christ in every part of it has a most singular and sublime tendency to advance the name, the attributes, and the honour of God, whom Satan hates with a perfect hatred: He would never lend his assisting hand to support a scheme of religion so divine and holy.

Never was any body of doctrines and of duties so composed and calculated to promote the glory of God, nor the good of man, as this gospel does: Our peace and happiness would be secured by it on earth, if all men would comply with it, and our felicity after death is the great and indefeasible proposal and design of it: Now Satan is a restless enemy to men, his fellow-creatures, as well as to God, his Maker; and he would never exert the remains of his angelic power to encourage and defend such a pious and beneficent religion.

But the most amazing progress and success of the gospel is another argument that proves it to be divine, even when devils and magicians opposed it as well as princes and philosophers. That the gospel itself, without the force of arms, that a naked gospel, that seems so incredible as this did, should spread itself throughout the world in so short a space of time, that by the preaching of a few despised persons, and several of them fishermen that were utterly unlearned: That this gospel should triumph over all the powers and policies of men and hell: That it should make its way in opposition to the wisdom of philosophers, and the will of princes, and all the temptations and terrors of this world: This is another miracle, which perhaps is as divine and convincing as any of the preceding wonders, that attested this gospel, when it was first preached.

I add also the testimony of prophecy to that of miracles. The wondrous and exact accomplishment of many prophecies since our Lord Jesus Christ dwelt on earth in the days of his flesh, confirm his gospel. The prophecies that he himself gave forth from God, is another testimony of this gospel, which is uncontrolable. The destruction of Jerusalem, the time and methods of its destruction, and the terrors of it, may be read in Mat. xxiv. And if you read the history of Josephus, a Jew, you find so many parallels, that you may say Christ did foretel it indeed.

I might here subjoin the predictions of the apostles, particularly that of St. Paul, and St. John, concerning the rise and spirit of antichrist, wherein the church of Rome so clearly answers the language of the visions and prophecies. But the brightest and most uncontrolable witness of prophecy to the truth of the gospel, is the most exact and punctual accomplishments of all the predictions of the Old Testament, in the life and death, the resurrection and glory of Jesus Christ our Lord. From the first promise given to Adam in the garden, down to the words of Malachi, the last of the prophets, you find every thing that was said of him fulfilled in his history. And thus the books of the Jews, wherein they placed all their hopes, confirm the gospel of

Christ, and refute and confound their own infidelity: So that if ever I had been a Jew, and did believe Moses and the prophets, I think I am constrained to be a christian, and believe in Jesus Christ.

Thus I have endeavoured to answer those objections against the gospel, which are pretended to arise from the truths or doctrines of it: And before I proceed to answer those cavils which are raised against it, because of the professors of it, I must finish the present discourse with a word or two of improvement.

Use 1. If this be a gospel not to be ashamed of, then study it well: Learn the truths and doctrines of it thoroughly: Truths and doctrines, which St. Paul, so wise, and so great a man, did not blush to profess, and preach, and die for. Value it as he valued it: The more you know it, the more you will esteem it; and the better you are acquainted with all the glorious articles of it, the less you will be ashamed of it: The divine harmony of the whole will cast a beauty and a lustre on every part.

Use 2. Furnish yourselves with arguments for it daily, that you may profess it without shame, and defend it without blushing. This is a day of temptation, and you know not what conversation you may be called into by divine providence; you know not what cavils you may meet with to assault your faith, and attack christianity. *Be ready therefore to give reasons of the hope that is in you*, and to make a just and pertinent reply to gainsayers, and convince those, if possible, that are led away captive by the wiles of the devil to forsake Christ and his gospel. Let not every turn of wit or sleight of argument and sophistry, make you waver in your faith. It is a gospel that will bear the trial of reasonings and reproaches. It has something in itself that is divine, and therefore it is able to support the professors of it against an army of cavillers.

Use 3. Submit to all the institutions of it. Profess the whole of the gospel; not only the doctrines, but the ordinances of this gospel, are divine and glorious; they have something in them that shew they come from God, and they have something in them that evidently leads to God. They have all something in their sense and signification that discovers divinity. Wait upon God therefore in all his ordinances, in the assemblies of christians, that you *may see his power and his glory in his own sanctuary*, and that you may, from your own experience, be able to say, that the gospel is too great, too glorious, too divine a thing in its doctrine and worship, and in all its institutions, for you ever to be ashamed of. It has now, for sixteen ages, endured the test of the world and the rage of earth and hell, and it shall stand in power and glory, till the heavens be no more.

HYMN FOR SERMON XV.

A Rational Defence of the Gospel.

SHALL atheists dare insult the cross,
Of our Redeemer God ?
Shall infidels reproach his laws,
Or trample on his blood ?

What if he chuse mysterious ways,
To cleanse us from our faults ?
May not the works of sov'reign grace
Transcend our feeble thoughts !

What if his gospel bids us fight
With flesh, and self, and sin ?
The prize is most divinely bright,
Which we are call'd to win.

What if the foolish and the poor,
His glorious grace partake ?
This but confirms his truth the more,
For so the prophets spake.

Do some that own his sacred name,
Indulge their souls in sin ?
Jesus should never bear the blame,
His laws are pure and clear.

Then let our faith grow firm and stron
Our lips profess his word ;
Nor blush, nor fear to walk among
The men that love the Lord.

SERMON XVI.

A Rational Defence of the Gospel: Or, Courage in Professing Christianity.

ROM. i. 16.—I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.

THE SECOND PART.

THERE are many in the world who call themselves christians, and boast in the name; yet if you ask them what the gospel of Christ is, they are either struck into confusion and silence, or they give such an auwkard and impertinent answer, as sufficiently discovers they know little of the religion of Christ, or of the sacred name into which they were baptized. Now that we may act and speak as becomes persons endued with reason, I thought it necessary at first to give some account what this gospel is, that you might know and understand the religion which you profess; and if ye will glory in the name of christian, ye may be able to tell

principles of reason and argument. The first sort of reproaches are those which are cast upon the doctrines of the gospel, and I hope I have rolled them away.

I repeat no more of these things, but proceed to the next sort of occasions of shame, and these are such as are supposed to arise from the professors of this gospel; and I shall endeavour to shew you also how they may be answered. They are chiefly these four.

I. Some will say, "The professors of this gospel in the beginning were the weak, and foolish, and mean things of this world; but it was despised by the wise, it was scorned by the great and honourable, and persecuted by the mighty. Why should a Paul, a pharisee, a doctor of the law, become a follower of a carpenter's Son, and associate with a parcel of fishermen? This is a scandal, and foolish indeed. *Who among the pharisees or rulers have believed on him*; John vii. 48." This was the stumbling-block of the gospel in that age, and it is the stumbling-block at which many persons take offence in our age too. "It is the unthinking multitude, say they, the mere mob of mankind, that are led away with the noise of strange things and the gospel. And it is only those who have no relish of good sense that can dispense with mysteries. The poorer and weaker sort of men and women flock after your powerful preachers of the gospel, but wise men despise it." I amvery glad, my friends, if in your conversation you meet with no such persons that ridicule the gospel at this rate. But there are many in our age and nation arrived at this height of pride and contempt of the gospel.

This objection may have more answers than one given to it; as *first*, it is a matter of unjust reproach, and it is false in fact; for all the professors of this gospel are not weak and unlearned. There have been in the very beginning of christianity some wise, some great persons, that have given testimony to this gospel by their believing it. St. Paul was a man of no weak reason, no mean understanding, no small learning, and yet he believes this gospel, and professes he is not ashamed of it.

And there have been in most ages of the church some instances of the power and success of this gospel in converting philosophers and senators and princes. The learned, the ingenious, and the noble amongst mankind have sometimes given up their names to Christ, have yielded their assent to his doctrines, and conformed their hearts and lives to the rules of his gospel. Men of wit and reason have been converted to the faith, and then have exerted their peculiar talents in the defence of christianity, and they have convinced the world that they had neither left their rea-

son nor their wit behind them when they became christians. Men of grandeur and power have sometimes also supported it with honour.

But the number of these have not been exceeding great. God has ordained that there should be some, to shew that it is no foolish and unreasonable doctrine, that it is not a religion unworthy of kings, nor unbecoming the wisest and the greatest of characters. But if there have been but a few great and wise have embraced it, it is evident that its success and glory is not owing to the wisdom and power of men, but to the divinity of its doctrines, and the power of God.

Besides, I might tell you, *secondly*, that riches, and grandeur, and elevated degrees of wit and learning, become a sore temptation to pride of mind and self-sufficiency. Now the faith of the gospel is founded in humility, and self-diffidence, and poverty of spirit; and this is one plain reason why it was received by so few of the rich, and the learned, and the mighty among men, though it was contrived and invented by God himself.

I answer, in the *third* place, that it is one of the designed characters of the true gospel of Christ, and it is foretold by the ancient prophets, that when it should come to be preached upon the earth, the poor should receive it. Its reception by the poor and weak among men, is one evidence that it comes from God; *Mat.* xi. 5. When John the baptist sent his disciples to our Saviour to know whether he was the Messiah, or must they expect another? *Go, tell John, the blind receive sight, the deaf hear, and the lame walk, and to the poor the gospel is preached; blessed is he that is not offended in me, &c.* Go, and give John this very account I now relate to you, and tell him these are my credentials, these are the testimonials I bring. John will infer that I am the Messiah, and this is the true gospel that I preach; for the great and rich, and the pretenders to wisdom among the Jews, account it *a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence*, and only a few of the poor receive it; as it was foretold by the prophets.

Each of us may say therefore, if only the wise, or the great or the rich, believed it, it must have been such a gospel as I could never have believed; for it wanted one character which is necessarily adjoined to it, that is, that the poor receive the gospel. *Father, I thank thee*, says our Lord, *that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, but thou hast revealed them unto babes;* Mat xi. 25. "It pleased God, when the world by wisdom knew not God," to darken all their wisdom, and turn it into folly, and to call those that were esteemed fools, and make them wise in believing the gospel, of Christ. It has pleased God to chuse *the* mean, and *weak, and contemptible things of this world to confound the wise and mighty.* It has pleased him to chuse the *things that*

are not, to bring to nought the things that are, that no flesh might glory in his presence; 1 Cor. i. 27, &c.

II. It is another occasion of stumbling or shame in the gospel of Christ, that some of the professors of it are vicious in their lives. "Will you believe such a gospel, says an infidel, that does not restrain the professors of it from the worst of sins?"

This, I confess, gives it great dishonour among the men of the world, and is sometimes ready to shake the faith of younger christians; they know not how to go on farther in christianity, for such and such that made great profession, you see how they are fallen. This is a common temptation of the devil; it is a frequent snare, and there hath been many a pious soul that hath been in danger of being caught thereby. The vices of some professors were great even in St. Paul's days: There were some among the Philippians; *Phil.* iii. 18. "Of whom I have told you often, and now even weeping, that they walk as enemies to the cross of Christ, and cast scandal and shame upon it. It makes my eyes flow with tears, and my soul bleed within me to hear of it: The gospel of Christ is so much dishonoured by these means."

But if we take a nearer view, we shall see that no doctrine ought to fare the worse, because some wicked men are professors of it. It was not counted a discredit to philosophy, that some of the professors of it, who hated the gospel, were vicious in their lives. I would ask the deist now, is there any ground to disbelieve natural religion, because there are some that make profession of it are fallen into great sins? The gospel itself *teaches us to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts*, and does not indulge one of them. And they are said to be enemies to the cross of Christ, when their conversation is all earthly, when their God is their belly, and their glory is their shame. This is no fault of the gospel, for they felt not the power of it. Nor is there any religion or profession in the world that would have had any followers at all by this time, if men must have entirely cashiered that religion, because there have been some persons vicious that have been professors of it. There is no sect, no religion in the world, though the institution and the rules of it have been ever so pious, but what has produced some persons that have been vicious in their lives.

But this cavil is still carried on, and urged with much vehemence. "If the gospel of Christ were a religion so heavenly, and so divine in its original, as you pretend, surely the nations that profess it would eminently exceed all other nations in piety, in justice and goodness: whereas the nations that now a-days embrace christianity, are not at all superior to the Mahometans, nor to some of the heathens, either in duty that relates to God or man: And if we may give credit to ancient history, the virtues of

the old Romans, long before the days of Julius Cæsar, shone much brighter than any of the virtues of the baptized nations: There was more truth and honesty, more devotion to the heavenly powers, more of a public spirit and zeal for their country's good, than we can find in any christian kingdoms or states now-a-days." To this I would give these three answers:

1. The account which we have of the shining virtues of these best ages of heathenism, is given us only by their own posterity, who lived in succeeding ages. Now it is the well-known temper and custom of mankind to magnify the virtue of their ancestors, and to say, that the former times are better than these; But you have scarce any heathen writers, who do not describe their own ages as vicious enough, if they have occasion to talk upon that subject. And therefore there is just reason to suspect the strict truth of these encomiums of their fore-fathers.

2. Although some social virtues in a heathen country might really flourish more for an age or two, springing from the principles of ambition, and honour, and love to their own country; yet there were such vices also practised among many of the gentile nations, which are seldom heard or known among christians: The apostle describes them in *Rom.* i. 26. and that in such a manner, as leads us to believe, that they were practised by those who professed wisdom among them.

It must be acknowledged also, that these nations were gross idolaters, and worshipped many gods, and that even in the times when their social virtues were most conspicuous. Now this is most highly criminal in the sight of the great and sovereign God, the Creator of all things: And the warmer and the more zealous were their devotions which they paid to these idols, with the neglect or contempt of the true God, the greater was their guilt and abomination.

But, 3. The chief answer I give is this, that when whole kingdoms are made christians merely by birth, education, and custom, it is not to be supposed that a twentieth part of them believe the gospel upon any just and reasonable principles of knowledge and choice. When whole cities and nations are worshippers of Christ, no otherwise than the Ephesians were worshippers of Diana, or the Turks of Mahomet, it is not reasonable to expect that there should be much difference in the virtues of such a national sort of Christians, Mahometans, or Heathens; for the principle from which all their religion springs is the same, namely, their education, custom, and fashion of their country; and therefore their vices are much the same as they would be according to the present reigning humour, disposition, or political temper of the nation, whatsoever were their form of religion and their established worship.

The true way therefore to put these things to the test, is to consider those christians only who believe and profess the gospel from knowledge, and choice, and inward conviction, and who make their religion a matter of solemnity and importance and not of mere form and custom. Now if you separate these from the rest of mankind, I am well assured, that as bad as the christian world is, you will find all the human and divine virtues more gloriously practised among such christians as these, than among an equal number of the professors of any other religion under the sun: For inward christianity, and the faith of the gospel, when it is built upon just foundations, will necessarily draw along with it such a train of virtues and graces, as shall *adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour;* and by such a comparison as this, men would be constrained to confess that *God is among us of a truth.*

III. The various and divided opinions, the sects and parties that are found in the christian world, have been another occasion of scandal and offence to the infidels. "How can we ever come, say they, to any certainty what your religion is, since you do not agree about it among yourselves?"

"All Europe pretends to be christian, and to believe the gospel; yet France, and Spain, and Italy, and Poland, and a good part of Germany, tell us, that true christianity is found only amongst them. But in the countries of Denmark, Sweden, and the northern parts of Germany, and in the British islands, there is another religion professed, of a very different kind, and they call theirs the pure gospel, and reformed christianity. The protestant and the papist divide these western parts of the world, and they are ready to tear one another to pieces upon the account of their different opinions and practices. Now if the books that contain the religion of Christ be of so very uncertain sense and signification, truly we are ashamed of such a doubtful religion; it is even as well for us to content ourselves with the religion that the light of nature teaches us, and the dictates of our common reason, which we think has more certainty in it."

To this I answer, that it is a great mistake to imagine that the light of nature and reason, if left entirely to itself in this corrupt and fallen state, has more certainty in its determinations than scripture hath. How many wild opinions hath the corrupt mind of man produced among the inhabitants of the heathen world, and this same light of nature has not corrected them? What infinite diversity of vain and monstrous fancies hath past for religion and devotion among them? And the light of nature has been supposed to dictate some of them, for they did not always pretend revelation for them. There have been wide and irreconcileable differences among the philosophers, as well as among the priests and the people of different nations. The light of nature

and reason is a poor dark bewildered thing, if it hath no commerce, nor communication with persons who have been favoured with divine revelation. It is only the scripture that has established and ascertained the doctrines of natural religion: And it is to the scripture that the deists of our age are obliged for their greater acquaintance with natural religion than ever their forefathers, the heathen philosophers, arrived at, though they are too proud to acknowledge it. If they agree better, and are more uniform in their principles now than the old epicureans, the stoics, and the platonists were, it is all owing to a more intimate acquaintance with the writings of Moses and the prophets, the evangelists, and the apostles; so that it is with a very ill grace that our present infidels can object to christians their difference of opinions, and pretend that this is a ground of shame to the gospel of Christ, and a reason why they do not believe or profess it.

But I come now to give some account of the true reasons of such divisions of sect and party among christians. There are two great causes of these divisions, and the charge is not to be laid upon the gospel of Christ, nor upon the books that contain it.

1. The first cause is, that the papist does not pretend to derive his religion merely from the bible; but he brings in the Jewish apocryphal writers of ancient ages, and lays them also for a foundation of his faith; and he makes the traditions of the christian church, which he pretends to have been delivered down from age to age, of almost the same authority as the scripture itself: And some of their authors have raised these traditions to equal dignity with the scripture, as being built upon the same foundation, *viz.* the authority of the church. As they have many things in their religion which they cannot find in the word of God; so they think it is sufficient if they can support them by these pretended traditions of the church. Whereas the protestant takes nothing for the ground of his faith but the books of the Old and New Testament; and what he cannot find written there, nor derived thence by most obvious and evident consequences, he does not profess it as any necessary part of his christianity. The religion of the protestant therefore is abundantly more conformable to the gospel of Christ, both in the doctrines and the worship of it, because it derives the whole from the word of God: But it is no wonder at all that there should be such a difference between them and the papists, when they lay such different foundations for their faith and practice.

2. Another reason why the protestant and papist differ so much is, because the papist pretends that there is an infallible judge among them to determine all controversies; and that their popes, and their councils, which they call the church, have authority to appoint what shall be esteemed the true articles of faith,

and to bring in rites and ceremonies into their worship according to their own invention and pleasure. And that all the people are bound to believe as the church bids them believe, and to practise in matters of worship whatsoever the church bids them practise; And upon this account they forbid the scripture to be read bythe common people, that they may not learn the truth of the gospel, but may take all for gospel which they teach them, and be content with it. Whereas the protestant has nothing else but his bible to have recourse to for the conclusion of all controversies; and he encourages every man to use his bible, and to judge for himself concerning the sense and meaning of it, using the best helps that he can obtain for this end: The protestant ministers each him not only what they know of the gospel, but they put the bible into his hand, and bid him search and see whether things are so or no, that thence he may learn what are those doctrines and those duties which Christ has required him to believe and practise. Thence it comes to pass, that there are almost a thousand things in popery, which the protestants utterly disown, because they disown the power of the pope, or church, to stamp new articles of faith, or invent new forms of worship.

Objection. But it it may be said still, there are so many different sects and parties among the protestants themselves, as encourages the deist to maintain his charge and accusation.—"Why do you, saith he, who profess to derive all your religion from the scripture, differ so much among yourselves, both in doctrine, in worship, and in the order of your churches, if the *gospel of Christ* be so excellent a religion, and if the books that contain it can give you so plain and certain a knowledge of it?"

I answer, That almost all those things wherein protestants differ, are but of smaller importance in religion, in comparison of those many and great things wherein they agree. The chief and most important points of christianity are written with so much plainness and evidence in the word of God, as would lead all humble, honest, sincere and diligent enquirers into a belief of them, and consent in them. Now it is not necessary that the lesser matters of christianity should be written down so expressly in scripture: For the all-wise God thought it proper to leave many of these articles of less importance more dubious and obscure, both to awaken the diligence of men to study his word, and to leave amongst them some occasions for the exercise of their mutual charity and forbearance. Our blessed Lord has thought it proper to put the universal love which he requires amongst his followers, to this test or trial, to see whether they will cultivate peace and charity to one another amidst their various and divided opinions in things of less concernment.

I confess there are some differences among protestants in the great doctrines of the Trinity, and the satisfaction of Christ, which must be acknowledged to be articles of very high moment and importance in christianity. But if we compare those few who profess dangerous opinions in these points with the millions that agree in the same general profession of faith, it will be found that their number is but very small. If we consider the great ignorance of God, which is found in all men by nature, and take a survey of the unhappy influences that education, fancy, passion, pride, friendship, aversion, precipitance and laziness, have upon mankind in forming their judgments and opinions, we shall not wonder to find some persons here and there falling into strange sentiments, contrary to the plain and sufficient evidence of scripture. We believe in general, that whoever puts off all prejudices, and is piously sincere in his search of the word of God, shall certainly find, through divine assistance, all needful truth. If therefore a disbeliever come with a serious, humble, and pious mind, and apply himself with diligence and fervent prayer to read the scripture; I am well assured he will become a christian, and find out so much of the doctrines and duties of the gospel, as are necessary to his eternal happiness.

But there will be heresies arising sometimes in the church. Tares will grow up sometimes in the field that is ever so well cultivated and sown with corn: And what unknown reasons there may be in the counsels and providence of God in permitting heresies to arise for the farther trial of his own people, is too high and hard a point for us to determine. The apostle saith; 1 Cor. xi. 19. *There must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest*: If such a thing as this is, shall be abused by men of corrupt minds, to turn them quite away from the gospel of Christ, and to support their own infidelity, they must answer for it at the great day to Christ their Judge.

Thus I have done with the third charge or accusation brought against the gospel, and removed the scandal and shame that some men have thrown upon it, because there are such sects, and parties, and divided opinions among the professors of it.

IV. Another occasion of scandal which infidels charge upon the gospel of Christ, is this, "That some who have long professed it have forsaken it; and one should be ashamed to embrace such a faith as this is, for it has been tried, and found to be vain and groundless, even by those who have known it long, and searched it through and through, and therefore at last they have abandoned and cast it off."

But in answer to this, give me leave to say, first, that the chief and most common reason why persons who have professed

christianity cast it off, is not because they found any just reason of blame either in its principles or rules; but because they think it too strict for them, and it curbs their vicious appetites more than they like.

I will allow, that perhaps there may be some persons who have abandoned the christian religion from a wantonness of fancy, from a licentiousness of thought, from a pride of reasoning, and who make it their glory to have thrown off the bonds of their education, and to have obtained the honour of free-thinkers, or from a presuming conceit that they must comprehend every thing in their religion, and will believe nothing that hath mysteries in it. Such vain principles as these may have influenced some minds, and given them up to apostacy: But, I fear, for the greatest part of those who forsake the gospel, have been tempted to it by the power of their lusts, which the gospel would restrain: and some of these persons upon their death-beds have confessed it too.

This is also sufficiently visible in the world, that when men have long professed this gospel and forsaken it, they seldom grow more pious, more sober, more honest or good than before; but, on the contrary, they generally have indulged vicious excesses, and neglected all piety, and this is rather a ground of glory to the gospel than a just reason of shame.

If these persons had generally grown more holy, if they had feared God more afterwards than ever they did before, if they had more aimed at the glory of God, and loved him better, when they forsook Christ and his gospel, then we might have some reason to suspect this gospel was false, and a mere mistake or imposture. But when these persons grow more unjust than before, love their neighbour less, are become more sensual, more selfish, disregard God more than they did before; I repeat it again, this is rather a ground of glory to the gospel of Christ, than of shame. Demas *hath forsaken us*, saith Paul, because he *loved this present world*; 2 Tim. iv. 10. A covetous Demas is no good argument why St. Paul should forsake Christ, or be ashamed of the gospel. And the apostle has shewn that those who have *made shipwreck of their faith*, have parted with *a good conscience* too, and lost their virtue; 1 *Tim.* i. 19, 20.

But there is another answer which the apostle John gives to this objection in his first epistle, chap. ii. ver. 19. *They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.* They might make a profession of the gospel, and perhaps give a real assent to the truths and doctrines of it by the convincing influence of miracles and human reason,

or perhaps they became christians merely by the force of education, because they were taught this religion from their childhood, and professed it without thought; but they never had such a powerful belief of this gospel of Christ, as to change their hearts, to renew their natures, to form their souls after the image of Christ into real holiness; and therefore like the hearers that are compared to stony ground, the seed did not sink deep into their hearts, though they might *receive the word at first with joy, but having not root in themselves; they endure but for a while, and when any temptation arises, they are offended*, and depart from the faith which they once professed; *Mat.* xiii. 20, 21. Thus it appears, that the gospel of Christ is never the worse in itself, nor does it deserve the less esteem in the world, notwithstanding such apostates as these, no more than seed-corn should be pronounced nought, because it does not bring forth a harvest in every soil.

I have now finished the third general head of discourse which I proposed, and have shewn, whatsoever occasions of shame might be supposed to arise either from the doctrines of the gospel, or the professors of it, are unjustly charged as blemishes on the gospel; and I have given particular answers to both sorts of cavils, and defeated the accusations.

One word of advice to christians shall conclude the present discourse; and that is this:—

Since the gospel of Christ gives no just occasions of shame, you that are professors of it should take heed that you do nothing to cast shame on this gospel. Do not mingle the christian faith with doubtful notions of your own. Do not defile your christian conversation with sinful practices. Do not make the lesser circumstances and appendages of your religion the matter of loud contest, and a party strife; for all these things expose the gospel to shame, and may justly put its professors to the blush, in the face of the world, when they are guilty of these practices.

Let me insist a little upon each of these.

1. Do not mingle the christian faith with doubtful notions and fancies of your own. The articles of our christianity, and the necessary truths of the gospel, are divine and glorious: Take heed you do not bring in your peculiar sentiments and favourite opinions, which have no sufficient evidence from the word of God, and join them in the same dignity with the articles of your faith; and much less should you dare to impose them upon the consciences of your fellow-christians. The gospel itself will suffer by it, and sink in the esteem of the world, when the divine doctrines of it are mingled with our weaknesses, and debased by the addition of our doubtful sentiments.

2. Defile not your christian conversation with sinful practices. Indulge not a conformity to this present evil world in any of the corrupt and unlawful customs and courses of it. Mingle not your practice of the lovely duties which this gospel enjoins, with lying, and slandering, and railing; do not interline your lives with religion and sin, with devotion and shameful lusts. It is a gospel that forbids all iniquity, it requires that you mortify sin and *cleanse yourselves from every defilement of flesh and spirit*, and that you go on to *perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord;* 2 Cor. vii. 1. The very design and end of it in God's eternal counsels and contrivance, is, *that you might be holy, and without blame before him in love;* Eph. i. 4. If you pursue this advice, then shall others, who behold you, confess that there is something divine in christianity, when you thus adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour. Thus you give the gospel its due honour by believing all it reveals, by worshipping according to the methods of its appointment, and by that purity of conversation which it enjoins.

3. Make not the lesser circumstances and appendages of your religion the matter of loud contest, and a party-strife. We are called to *contend earnestly for the* great and necessary doctrines of *faith*, which were once delivered to the saints: But we are commanded also to receive those that are weak in the faith, without involving them *in doubtful disputations* about matters of less moment. Give no occasion to the infidel to blaspheme the gospel by your factions and quarrels, and the rage of a bitter and unsanctified zeal. Oh that the time were come, when *the wolf and lamb shall lie down together, and there shall be nothing to hurt or destroy in all the holy mountain!* But surely, it is very hard if the lambs themselves, who belong to the flock of Christ, cannot live without hurting and destroying one another; that christians cannot live without exposing their divine and heavenly religion to the blasphemies of sinful men. Happy were the christian world, if we could all behave ourselves so as never to give occasion to the adversary to reproach the professors of the christian faith, nor throw shame and dishonour upon the gospel of Christ! May the blessed Spirit of God teach us this lesson effectually, and let it be copied out in our lives daily, till we arrive at the regions of perfect holiness and love! *Amen.*

SERMON XVII.

A Rational Defence of the Gospel: Or, Courage in Professing Christianity.

Rom. i. 16.——I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.

THE THIRD PART.

THOUGH the passion of shame has something in it that sinks our nature, and enfeebles our spirits, yet it is a very becoming passion, where sin is the object of it; and indeed it was wisely ordained by our Creator to be a guardian to those small remains of natural virtue that abide in us since the fall. We find the first young sinners clothed with shame in the garden of Eden at the presence of God. But the growing corruption of our natures, the subtilty of Satan, and the temptations of this world have joined together to take this piece of artillery out of the hands of virtue, and make use of it in their attacks upon religion and goodness. We ought to be ashamed indeed of nothing but our sin, our folly, and our wretchedness; but we have been too ready to be ashamed, even of the grace of God, and the methods of our recovery from folly, wretchedness, and sin. The gospel itself, *the glorious gospel*, has been made a matter of reproach among men, and its professors have been sometimes tempted to be ashamed of it.

The blessed apostle in my text had gained a victory over this temptation, for he was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. Whatsoever there might be contained in the doctrines of this gospel, or whatsoever might be found among the professors of it, from which infidels or unbelievers might take occasion to throw shame and scandal upon it; yet I have shewn in the two foregoing discourses, that all this is unjustly charged on the gospel, and have given particular answers to both sorts of cavils.

I go on now to the last proposal, which is to explain the force of the apostle's argument against shame in professing and preaching this gospel, and to make it appear, that the words of my text contain a general and most extensive guard, or defence, against all possible occasions of shame in the profession of christianity; and that is, that *the gospel of Christ is the power of God for the salvation of all that believe.*

Now this is an argument which you, who believe in Christ, may all assume to yourselves as well as the apostle: You cannot preach this gospel so well as he, nor explain the reasons of your faith to others, and establish it upon so solid and unshaken foundations of argument, as Paul could do; but every christian, that has embraced the faith, and felt the power of this gospel for his own salvation, may give this reason for the profession of it, and may support his courage in opposition to all the sharpest temptations of mockery and reproach.

When the apostle says, it is the power of God, we must suppose him to understand, it is a most powerful means, or effectual instrument that God uses, to save souls, and it is attended with divine power for that end.

It is more powerful than the light of nature; for we have no just reason to believe, that the mere light of nature, without some helps of divine revelation, or some unwritten traditions of it, ever saved any souls at all; and if there have been any of the sinners of the heathen nations made partakers of grace, I think it is otherwise to be accounted for than merely by the poor remains of the light of nature.

It is more powerful than any religion that men or angels could invent, and more powerful too, than any religion that God himself ever invented, or revealed, and proposed to men before the gospel of Christ. His revelations to the patriarchs were but few; they were made here and there to a house or two, or to a family; they were particular favours that he bestowed upon persons called out of idolatry, nor had they a very long, nor spreading, nor lasting influence, except in the family of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, where they were frequently renewed.

It is more powerful than all the revelations of grace, which God made by Moses to the children of Israel, and intermingled with the Jewish law: for these discoveries reached but to one single nation, and wrought but feebly toward the conversion of sinful souls to God and holiness, in comparison of what the gospel of Christ has done.

Besides, let it be considered, that all the power which all the former discoveries of grace to the patriarchs, or to the Jews, had to save souls, was derived from the gospel of Christ, which is contained in them in lower measures, and in a more obscure manner. Therefore, since the gospel of Christ now stands forth in open light, and in full glory, it is most eminently powerful to convert sinners, to bring this apostate world back again to God, and to save millions of souls.

I. It is the most powerful means of salvation, considered in itself, and in its own nature and influence.—II. It is the most powerful means, as it is accompanied with the influences of the Holy Spirit.

The first of these may be called a moral persuasive influence; the last is supernatural and sovereign. Let us meditate on each of these distinctly.

I. It is the most powerful means, if we consider the gospel in itself, and its own nature. Not that the mere word of the gospel, reaching the ears of men, is sufficient to change the heart, and to save the soul without divine influences: For it is said to be the power of God to salvation; that is, it is that doctrine whereby God exerts his divine power to save sinful man. But still it must be granted, that the doctrine itself in its own nature has a very great and evident tendency to this glorious end, as it is the noblest, the richest, and the brightest discovery of grace that ever was made to man.

If we consider it in its own nature, it has the greatest moral power, or persuasive influence toward the salvation of perishing sinners. This is easily proved by explaining what this salvation means.

Salvation includes in it a freedom from the guilt and punishment of sin, together with a right and title to heaven; it implies also a freedom from the power of sin, and thereby a preparation for heaven, and a final possession of it. Under each of these considerations it will appear with great evidence, that *the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is the power of God to salvation.*

1. It is the most powerful means to set sinners free from the guilt and punishment of sin, and to relieve a distressed conscience under the sense of divine anger: It gives the most effectual security to a believer against the terrors of hell and eternal death; for it not only declares, that there is forgiveness with God, but it shews us the foundation upon which this forgiveness stands, namely, the satisfaction made to the offended justice of God by the death and sacrifice of Jesus Christ, his Son. Suppose it were possible for a philosopher, or wise man, to prove that God would forgive the sins of the penitent, yet there is nothing but the gospel that can set the conscience at such joyful ease from the terror of guilt, and release the soul from the chains wherewith it was held: "For now, says the believer, I not only hear it proved by divine testimony, that there is pardon of sin to be obtained from God, but I see how God may do it with honour: I behold the atonement that is made by Christ Jesus, his own Son: The atonement is equal to the offence: He can justify me, though I am a sinner, upon the account of this perfect righteousness, and

› it with glory to all his terrible perfections; therefore I
ture my assent to this doctrine, and I may rest my soul

The gospel is a powerful means also to raise undeserving
› a hope of heaven and eternal life. It shews us what
, by the discoveries of one that has been there, even the
od himself. *Life and immortality are brought to light*
spel, which lay hid under much darkness before; 2 Tim.
teaches us also, how the happiness of heaven is procured
ven by the obedience and blood of the Son of God; and
, some think, heaven is called *the purchased possession* in
14. It assures us, that this blessed state of the enjoy-
God in unchangeable peace, and in the company of
pirits, waits for every believer, when he is dislodged
flesh, and when the habitation of the body is no longer
ain the spirit: And it reveals also the final heaven of
ts, when the body shall be raised into immortality.
at this gospel, says the soul, I could have no just ground
for heaven; for all my best righteousnesses are im-
my fairest acts of holiness have many defects in them;
hold the perfect righteousness of my Saviour that has
it. A life of holiness without defect, and a most sub-
›bedience to a painful and shameful death, has been the
purchase of it."

This gospel is a most powerful means to subdue sin in the
nortify corrupt nature, to inspire us with virtue, to wean
s from vice, sensuality, and trifles, and from all the in-
pretences to blessedness that the world can flatter us
The gospel of Christ, both in his own personal ministry
d in the writings of his apostles, sets before us the most
heme of morality, piety and virtue, that ever the world
The sacred dictates of probity and goodness towards
well as the venerable rules of piety toward God, which
ered up and down in an imperfect and obscure manner
he philosophers, and shine like a star here and there
nidnight darkness of heathenism; these are all col-
nd refined in the gospel of Christ, and fill the chris-
ld with a pure and universal light like the sun unclouded
idian sky: We know our duty infinitely better from the
ons of Christ and St. Paul, than all the Platos, and the
s, all the Zenos and the Antonines of Greece and Rome,
er teach us.

e most divine rules of the gospel are attended also with
est motives to love virtue, and to hate all vice; for never
evil of sin so displayed to the eyes and senses of men, as

by the cross and gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Never did sin appear so hateful, so abominable, so justly the object of divine and human hatred, as when it appeared pressing the soul of the holy One of God into agonies and sharp anguish. A believer, who has seen the evil of sin as revealed in this gospel, will hate it, and will be led powerfully to a conquest over it.

Besides, the terrors of hell are revealed to us among the doctrines of christianity, as the just punishment of sin, and that in such a manner as no other religion pretends to: For, as the doors of heaven are opened by our Lord Jesus Christ, both by his ministry on earth, and by his ascent into heaven, and by the farther discoveries which his apostles have made of the future unseen happy world, so the doors of hell are opened too. Our Lord Jesus himself preached hell and terrors to sinners with a sacred vehemence, and set everlasting fire in a clearer and more dreadful light than ever had been done by all the philosophers in the world. The soul of every saint has been in some measure a witness of this truth, when it lay under the work of divine conviction.

And not only the horrid nature and evil of sin, and the dreadful consequences of it, are powerful motives to make us stand afar off, and fear it: but "The sweet and constraining influence of the love of Christ does most effectually incline me," saith the believer, to hate every sin, and to follow after universal holiness: Shall I build up again the things which my Saviour died to destroy? This would be to make him suffer agonies in vain, and run counter to all the designs of his bleeding love, and the voluntary sacrifice of his soul?"

"I have also the glorious and perfect example of my blessed Lord: Never did virtue and religion shine so bright, and look so amiable as in his life, and he has set it before me as my pattern: I feel the attractive and divine power of it: Where my Lord leads, I must follow; for I would fain be like him. He draws me by his example, and he draws me too by his heavenly promises. He spreads the glories and the joys of heaven before me, to allure my hope; I see those sacred glories, I long after the possession of these unfading joys, and I must and will keep the path that leads to paradise, that where my Lord is, I may be also. The rules and precepts of holiness, which my Lord has taught me, are more pure, more clean, more perfect, more divine and godlike, than ever any other scheme of rules and duties was; and the joyful and dreadful motives given me to press after this holiness, are infinitely beyond all the motives that any doctrine of religion has proposed. Blessed be God that I ever learnt those holy rules, that I ever felt the power of these divine motives, and am become a lover of holiness."

4. Thus the gospel prepares the saint for heaven, and fits every power of his soul for the business and blessedness of those happy regions. "Once, says he, I had no delight in spiritual things; I had no relish of spiritual pleasures; but now I taste them with delight, and I rejoice in the hopes of a sweeter and more complete taste of them on high. Once I had no love to God: it is true, I feared him as some unknown and extraordinary terror; but I had no delight in him, no desire after him. Now he is the object of my warmest love, and of my sweetest meditations. Heaven itself, as it is described in the word of God, was not pleasant to me. What! The everlasting continuance of a sabbath? Perpetual employments of worship and service to be done for God everlastingly? These are things that were not agreeable to carnal nature; but by the influence of this gospel of Christ my heart is new-moulded, and I delight in the fore-thoughts of such a heaven as the gospel describes." Such instances as these of the sweet efficacy of the gospel upon the soul of man, turning it into a divine temper, and fitting it for the enjoyment of God, are so many proofs of the power of this gopel unto salvation, and so many grounds and reasons why the believer cannot be ashamed of it.

But I must add, in the fifth place, it is the gospel of Christ that brings believers to the final possession of heaven. Then, and not till then, is the salvation perfect, it is the gospel that has given us an unchangeable promise of heaven, when our state of trial is ended here on earth, and Christ is bound to fulfil it. The gospel assures us, that when we are absent from the body, we shall be present with the Lord. When we see the heavens open at the death of Stephen the first martyr, and Jesus Christ, standing there to receive his departing spirit; we believe that the same Jesus will fulfil the same kind office to us also, and receive our spirits, if we have been found faithful to the death.

The same gospel also gives us a more distant hope and glorious assurance of the resurrection of our bodies from the prison of the grave. When we behold the body of our blessed Saviour rising from the tomb, and ascending to glory, and when we are told, that his resurrection is a pledge and pattern of ours; then with a joyful expectation we wait for the same blessedness. The gospel lays an obligation upon Christ himself to raise his saints from the dead; for he himself tells us, that it is the will of his Father, that everyone which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, should have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day; John vi. 40.

Hence it comes to pass, that the believer triumphs over death under the influence of these hopes. "Now, saith the saint,

I can venture to die; for my spirit shall be received to dwell with my Saviour among the spirits of the just that are made perfect. These feeble and withering limbs of mine I can chearfully commit them to dust and the grave; for the great trumpet must sound, the dead must arise, my Redeemer will call my flesh from its dark prison; I shall arise to meet the Lord in the air, and dwell with him for ever in unknown worlds of blessedness." Thus I have shewn you the first thing I proposed, viz. how the gospel in its own nature has a very proper and powerful tendency in a moral or persuasive way towards the salvation of the soul, as it insures pardoning grace and final blessedness to believers.

II. I come now to shew how the gospel is made powerful to the salvation of sinners by the accompanying influence of the Spirit of God, and this is supernatural and sovereign. If I should run over all the particulars I have just before mentioned, I might make it appear in each of them, how the Spirit of God by the word of his gospel, works this salvation.

It is this blessed Spirit that awakens the stupid and thoughtless sinner to a sense of his guilt and danger. It is he shews him the evil of sin, and makes him groan after deliverance, and cry out, what shall I do to be saved? And it is the Spirit that reveals and discovers Christ Jesus to him as the only and all-sufficient Saviour: It is he who shews the convinced sinner, that

It is only the Spirit of God that can make the discoveries of aven in the gospel effectual to awaken our hope, and to raise r joy: He shews us how it is purchased by the blood of Christ, d that it is made sure to all those that believe: He stamps his vn holy image upon us, and seals us up for the inheritance of aven; *Eph.* i. 13. *When ye heard the word of truth, the gospel your salvation*, and *believed it, ye were* then *sealed with the Holy irit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance.* The irit is sent into our hearts as a *Spirit of adoption, whereby we ll God Father*; Gal. iv. 6. And he changes us from children wrath into the sons and daughters of the living God; and he nself dwelling in us is a pledge and *earnest of that inheritance, ich is reserved for us among the saints in light.*

It is the same blessed Spirit that makes the gospel of Christ werful to mortify sin in us; for though the words of the gospel bid all iniquity, and require us to renounce the lusts of the sh, and the vanities of the world, if we belong to Christ; yet is by the Spirit of God alone that we are enabled to *mortify deeds of the body*, that we may obtain eternal life: It is he it makes the commands of Christ come with divine power and thority upon the soul, and gives the motives of the gospel wer to persuade us: It is he that renews our affections, makes hate sin, and love God supremely, and causes us to delight in e spiritual pleasures of a future, unseen world, which before we eated with contempt, or disregard: It is by the *sanctification of e Spirit, and the belief of the truth*, that we are prepared for e heavenly *glory whereunto we are called by the gospel*; 2 Thess. 13. And since the Spirit of God is promised to *dwell in us for er*; John xiv. 16, 17. we have good reason to believe he will our eternal Sanctifier in heaven and our eternal Comforter.

There is such a thing as the influence of the Spirit of God tending the gospel of Christ. The apostle argues thus with e Galatian christians, *Received ye the Spirit by the works of the w, or by the hearing of faith?* Gal. iii. 2. And it is the great omise of the gospel, or the new covenant, that God would *send s Spirit* to make it powerful for the blessed ends for which he has signed it; *Ezek.* xxxvi. 25, 26, 27. *Joel.* ii. 28. *Zech.* xii. 10. . xliv. 3.

In the primitive days of christianity, and the age of miraes, the Holy Spirit attended the preaching of the gospel with s extraordinary *gifts of tongues, of healing, of prophecy*, as ell as with the graces of conviction, and sanctification, and comrt: And the suddenness and the glory of the change that was rought on sinners carried with it an illustrious and incontested roof of the presence and power of God and his Spirit. Nor ave some fainter resemblances of such glorious grace been alto-

gether wanting in later ages. There have been some most remarkable instances of great sinners converted at once by the *gospel of Christ, and the demonstrations of the Spirit.*

But in his more usual and ordinary communications of grace, he works so gently upon our natures, and in so sweet and connatural a way, as not to distinguish his agency in a sensible manner from the motions of our own souls; for he never disturbs our rational powers, nor puts any violence upon the natural faculties; yet when we are changed, when we are renewed, when sin is mortified, the scripture tells us, that it is the Spirit of God has done it: When our souls are prepared for heaven, and our corrupted natures sanctified, and suited to the things that are prepared in heaven for us, we are assured by the word of God, that the Holy Spirit has been the great operator, and has wrought this change in us. Thus I have made it appear at large, how *the gospel of Christ is the power of God to salvation.* I apply myself immediately to raise a few inferences from the subject I have been treating of.

Inference.—I. How unreasonable are all the reproaches that are cast upon this gospel! A gospel that saves mankind from misery, and from sin, and eternal death! A gospel that teaches men how to appear before a holy and terrible God with comfort, though their sins are many, and their righteousnesses are imperfect! A gospel that gives the hope of pardon to criminals and rebels, and the hope of heaven to undeserving creatures! And all this upon such solid grounds and foundations as justifies its highest promises and proposals to the reason of men! It is a gospel that changes our sinful natures into holiness, and reforms our hearts as well as lives! A gospel that, aided by divine power, creates souls anew, and raises dead sinners to life! It is a gospel that turns wolves into lambs, and makes ravenous vultures as meek as doves! A gospel that so disturbs the kingdom of Satan, as to take thousands of slaves and captives out of his dominion, to transfer them into the glorious kingdom of Christ, and make them chearful and willing subjects! A gospel that fulfils gloriously the first promise, and makes it appear, that the seed of the woman hath broke the serpent's head, and destroyed the works of the devil. You have never seen, you have never known, you have never learned this gospel aright, if you have not felt it to be the power of God unto salvation. Those that can speak evil of this gospel, it may be universally said concerning them, *they speak evil of the things they know not;* for if they had known this gospel as they ought to know it, they would have seen it all over glorious and divine; they would have felt it to be attended with divine power to their salvation, and then they would never speak evil of it.

The heathen world may be ashamed of their doctrines and ir religion; the heathen worshippers may be ashamed of their rifices, their superstitions, and their forms of devotion; for y have no power to save their souls: And many of them were leed brutish and shameful. Mahomet, the founder of the irkish religion, may be ashamed of his alcoran, and volume of les and incredible lies; all his followers may be ashamed of ir prophet, and of the sensual paradise that he promises them. ie Jews, under the eye of Christ, and the sun-beams of the spel, may be ashamed of the vain traditions of their rabbins ich were never divine: and even of their old rites and cere-onies which Moses gave them; for all these are now but *weak d beggarly elements*; the Spirit of God calls them so; *Gal.* iv. They have now no power to save souls, since God hath abo-hed them; nor indeed had they ever any power but what they rrowed from this gospel of Christ, which lay concealed in em: But let none of us that believe and profess the gospel of hrist, be ever ashamed of any of the doctrines, or precepts, or omises of it; for they are all holy, they are all heavenly; all them have divine power accompanying them to lead souls to lvation.

II. Learn hence the true method of obtaining christian cou-ge; courage to profess the gospel of Christ against all opposition: is by getting it wrought into your hearts and lives by christian perience, and not by learning a mere form of words in a road education and catechism. You must feel it as *the power of od to your salvation*, or you will never suffer much for it: Let be an *ingrafted word able to save your souls*; James i. 21. and en it will harden your faces against all blaspheming adversaries, id the terrors of a persecuting world: then you will be able to nder a most powerful reason why you are bold to profess this spel, and to *answer every one that asks you a reason of the hope at is in you*; you will be able to oppose those that set themselves ainst the gospel of Christ, when you feel this divine spring of urage within you.

I have encouraged you before, to acquaint yourselves with asons and arguments that may defend your religion, and sup-ort your faith: But hours of temptation may come, when all ie knowledge and learned furniture of your head, all the argu-ients that are treasured up in your memory, and all the reason-igs that your invention can supply you with, will hardly be able keep your faith and hope firm and stedfast; for Satan goes efore you in skill and rational argument; and though your argu-ients are strong and solid, yet he may baffle you by his hellish ophistry, and thus cheat you of your faith, and your hope, and our heaven, if you have not got this gospel wrought into your

hearts with power, if you have not felt it to be *the power of God unto salvation.*

Hence it comes to pass, that in times of great temptation and persecution there are many fall away, as the leaves of a tree in the blasts of autumn, when but here and there one stands and endures the shock: It is because there are so few of the professors of the gospel have felt it to be the power of God to the conversion of their souls, and turning their hearts to God and heaven. And hence it comes to pass also, that several unlearned christians in all ages, that could not argue much for the faith in a rational way, yet could dare to die for it, because they had this argument wrought in their own souls; they had felt a divine power going along with it to change their natures, to make them new creatures, to give them the hope of heaven, and a preparation for it.

III. From what you have heard of this subject, learn the wide extent of this argument for the defence of the gospel of Christ, and the invaluable worth of it to every christian, *viz.* that the gospel is the power of God to your salvation.

It is an argument of wide extent: for it belongs to every christian, to the wise and to the unwise, to the weak and the strong; there is no sincere christian, no true believer in Christ, but hath got the foundation of this argument wrought within him: He knows this gospel is divine, and he should not be ashamed to believe and profess it; for he hath felt it support his soul under a sense of guilt, and give him solid hope of pardoning grace. He hath found it change his sinful nature, soften his heart into repentance, and turn him from a sinner into a saint; it hath laid the foundation of eternal life within him. And as it is an argument that belongs to every true christian; so it answers every objection that an infidel can bring against the gospel, either from the doctrines, or from the professors of it: And methinks, I would fain have you all furnished with this glorious argument, and learn to manage it for the defence of your faith.

Do they tell you, that the doctrines of the gospel contain mysteries in them, and things that are unsearchable? Do they endeavour to put you out of countenance by ridiculing the truth of christianity, as being contrary to the common opinions and reasonings of men? Do they reproach them as foolish and unreasonable, and do they endeavour to persuade you that they are not sufficiently attested, and there is not ground enough to give credit to them? Though there have been particular answers given to each of these cavils in the first discourse; yet you may give this general and short reply to all of them, and say, "I am sure they are not contrary to reason: for they are divine. They are not incredible, nor do they want sufficient evidence; for God him-

self by his own Spirit has borne witness to them in my heart: He has wrought an almighty work there by the means of this gospel: He has created me anew unto faith, and hope, and holiness: He has turned my heart from earth to heaven, and subdued the sinful inclinations of my nature by the precepts, by the promises, by the glorious discoveries of this gospel: He has made use of it to save my soul; and I carry about me an incontrolable proof that it came from heaven." Now though this sort of argument may have but little force in it sometimes for the conviction of the infidel; yet it is of sufficient force to establish the believer.

But I proceed. Do they fill your ears with the mean and contemptible character of the professors of this gospel? Do they charge many of them with vicious practices! Do they tell you of their different opinions, their contests and their quarrels? And do they discourage you by pointing to the apostates that have forsaken the faith? You may defend yourself and your profession against all these objections by the same general argument thus; "Are the professors of it some of the mean and base things of this world? But they are saints, and this gospel has made them so; they are the sons and daughters of the most high God by faith in this gospel; and I will not be ashamed to reckon myself of their society, and to number myself amongst them. Are there many that are called christians, whose lives are vicious? Surely they never knew this gospel in truth; they are but false professors of it. There are thousands that can bear this witness to the gospel, that it has changed their hearts; it has renewed their natures: it has made them hate every vice, and their lives shine amongst men glorious in holiness, and resembling God himself. Are the sentiments of some of them different from others? It is chiefly in points of lesser importance; but the substantial truths of it, which are the power of God to salvation, are professed and acknowledged by us all. And though a thousand should forsake this gospel, and become apostates, yet I can never part with it, while I feel the blessed effects of it abiding upon my heart, and I trust, through the grace of God, they shall abide for ever."

This leads me to the last inference.

IV. What strong engagements is every true christian under to maintain the profession of this gospel? Not only is he laid under many obligations from the commands of God, and the bonds of duty, and gratitude, and love, but he has a constant pressing obligation within him. "How can I be ashamed of my hope, my portion, my everlasting all? Shall I be ashamed of that gospel, upon which my salvation is founded, and my best and highest interest, even my expectations of endless felicity? If I let go this faith, if I lose my hold of this gospel, I let go my hold

of Christ, of God, and his love; I let go my hold of heaven, and all my happiness: My sins all return upon me with their insufferable loads of guilt and anguish of conscience, if I lose my faith in this gospel; for all my hope of pardon is built upon this foundation: heaven with the joys of it vanish from my soul, if I part with this glorious gospel of Christ, and death and hell face me with all their terrors."

There is an awful and solemn motive derived from the great judgment-day to maintain the profession of this glorious gospel; for our Lord himself has pronounced this threatening, and he will fulfil it, *Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and my words amongst a sinful generation of men, I will also be ashamed of him before my Father and his holy angels.* But this text shall be the subject of some future discourses.

HYMN FOR SERMONS XVI. and XVII.

The Gospel the power of God to Salvation.

WHAT shall the dying sinner do,
That seeks relief for all his woe?
Where shall the guilty conscience find
Ease for the torment of the mind?

How shall we get our crimes forgiven,
Or form our natures fit for heaven;
Can souls all o'er defil'd with sin;
Make their own powers and passions clean?

In vain we search, in vain we try,
Till Jesus brings his gospel nigh:
'Tis there such power and glory dwell,
As saves rebellious souls from hell.

This is the pillar of our hope,
That bears our fainting spirits up:
We read the grace, we trust the word,
And find salvation in the Lord.

Let men or angels dig the mines,
Where nature's golden treasure shines;
Brought near the doctrine of the cross,
All nature's gold appears but dross.

Should vile blasphemers with disdain
Pronounce the truths of Jesus vain,
I'll meet the scandal and the shame,
And sing and triumph in his name.

SERMON XVIII.

Faith the Way to Salvation.

:ON. i. 16.——The gospel of Christ,—it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

SALVATION is a frequent and familiar word in the mouth of ll who call themselves christians. It is a sort of asseveration or ath among the looser and meaner part of mankind: As I hope) be saved. But little do they know what salvation means. ll the notion they have of it is this, that they would be saved rom going down to hell, a place of fire and torment, and that hey would go up to heaven when they die, to some unknown hining place above the skies, where they shall be free from all ain and uneasiness. This is the utmost point to which their dea reaches, and I think I have hit their sense exactly in this description. Alas! poor ignorant creatures! They have no thought of being saved from sin, of having their hearts made holy, their inful inclinations rectified, their passions subdued or refined, their love turned toward God and things spiritual, and their desire and delight fixed upon things divine and holy, instead of their sensual entertainments of flesh and blood. They have no concern about the pardon of the guilt of sin, and restoration to the favour or image of God, and not so much as a wish for the joys that arise from his love, or from the blessed presence of our Lord Jesus Christ in the world to come.

I have shewn you therefore in the foregoing discourse what this salvation is, and made it appear that the gospel is the power of God to salvation, that is, it is a powerful means in the hand of the Spirit of God to save us from the guilt of sin, and to give us a right to heaven; to save us from the power of sin, to fit us for the business and the joys of heaven, and ensure to us the actual possession of it.

There are two things yet remain to be considered in discoursing on this subject:

I. The place or influence that faith, or believing, hath in this salvation; for the gospel provides this blessing only for believers. It is called the power of God to salvation to every ne who believes.—II. The wide extent of this glorious benefit: It belongs to every one that believes, whether Greek, or Jew.

I shall treat of each of these particularly:

First, Since the gospel is the power of God to the salvation of them that believe, let us enquire, what place or influence has our faith in this concernment?

To answer this, we may consider faith in its various acts or degrees of exercise as it begins in assent, as it proceeds to affiance, and as it is completed in assurance; and shew what influence each of them hath in the work of salvation.

1. An assent to the truths of the gospel must begin the work of salvation in us: There must be a belief and inward conviction of our sinful and dangerous state, which is more clearly revealed under the gospel, and that there is an atonement made for sin by the blood of Christ: We must believe, that there is forgiveness to be found with God, for the sake of this atonement; and that there is grace enough in our Lord Jesus Christ, to renew our sinful natures, and to fit us for heaven. This usually begets in the sinner, who is truly awakened, some desire toward this salvation, and some distant hope of obtaining it. When the poor perishing creature believes and beholds the glorious influence of the death and righteousness of Christ to justify a sinner in the sight of God; when he surveys the love, the wisdom, the grace, and the power of Christ, answerable to all his wants, he then comes to determine thus with himself, "This salvation is glorious and desirable; the methods proposed, even for my own attainment of it are practicable and sufficient, and why should not I apply myself to this Saviour, and seek this unspeakable happiness?"

2. Affiance or trust in Jesus Christ the Saviour is the next degree of faith. When we are willing to be delivered from the condemning guilt of sin, and from the defiling power of it, and have seen an all-sufficiency of atonement, grace, and power in Christ, then we commit our souls into the hands of Jesus, the Mediator for this blessed purpose, and make a solemn surrender of our whole selves into his charge and care, that we may be pardoned for the sake of his death, that we may be accepted of God through his righteousness, that we may be sanctified and made holy by his grace and Spirit, and that we may be fitted for and preserved to his kingdom. We reflect upon our past iniquities, and mourn to think that we have been rebels so long; we are ashamed and grieved for our rebellions, and we now most earnestly desire to be made willing subjects to his holy government; and therefore we entrust our souls with him, and beg that he would take us under his care for this end, and bring us into the Father's presence with comfort and joy. This is the soul's coming to God by Jesus Christ.

Now such an act of faith as this is, has some sensible ten-

ency to promote the peace of a distressed conscience, the sanc-ication of a sinful nature, the solid hope of heaven, and a pre-aration for it. But still it must be acknowledged, that its ori-nal and chief influence arises from divine appointment. The ospel is the power of God to salvation, and it is by divine omise and power that faith saves the soul. Such a faith, or ust in Christ, has all the promises of gospel-blessings be-nging to it. God has appointed in his word, and it is the anding rule of the gospel, *He that believeth shall be saved;* ark xvi. 15, 16.

All the parts of salvation come by faith: Justification, and vour in the sight of God; *Rom.* v. 1. *Being justified by faith; have peace with God.* Adoption comes also by faith; *Gal.* . 26. *Ye are the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.* nctification is ascribed to the same principle: *Acts* xv. 19. he Gentiles had their *hearts purified* from sin *by faith.* Joy and pe come in this way also; *Rom.* xv. 13. *The God of hope fill u with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in pe through the power of the Holy Ghost.* And you may read veral of these benefits of the gospel, these divine ingredients our salvation put together, and all attributed to faith; *Acts* xvi. 18. I send thee now to the Gentiles, saith the Lord Jesus St. Paul, *to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, d from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive rgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them who are sanctified, faith that is in me.*

Faith, or affiance in Jesus Christ, is an acceptance of this lvation, it is a trust in the offered grace, it is a dependance on e promises of the gospel confirmed by Christ, it is the surren-r of a sinful soul to Jesus the Saviour to perform his whole ork of grace for him and to him; and thereby the believing nner, according to the appointment of God in his gospel, par-kes of all the benefits that are treasured up in Christ.

Faith in the gospel relieves the distressed soul under a sense the guilt of sin, and the humble weary sinner finds mercy to rgive, and strength to subdue it. Faith appropriates and applies e blood of Christ, that sovereign medicine, to the wounds of guilty conscience, and the conscience finds ease and refreshment. applies the grace of Christ, that powerful antidote, to expel e venom of in-dwelling sin, and the soul is healed in some mea-re, and the poison is expelled. It lays hold on the power of hrist to assist in the performance of every duty, and it obtains vine assistance. Every true believer has experienced some-ing of these benefits by a sincere surrender of himself to Christ such a way of trust and holy dependance.

Can the thirsty soul taste of the running water, and not

find refreshment, since God, who created water, has ordained it to refresh the thirsty? Can weary limbs lie down on a bed, and not find ease, since a bed is made to give ease and rest to the weary? Can a fainting creature drink a divine cordial appointed to give life, and yet feel no revival? No more can a guilty, distressed, and penitent sinner believe the truths of the gospel, and trust in Jesus the Saviour, and yet find no relief: for this is the will and settled law of the God of heaven, that peace and holiness shall be obtained this way.

3. When faith grows up to assurance, it approaches towards complete salvation. Then the christian can say, *I know I have believed on the Son of God*, I know I enjoy his favour. Then the holiness and the joy increase, for the salvation enters into the soul in fuller measures: The nearer faith arises to assurance of our own interest in the grace of Christ, the more it supports the soul, the more it comforts, the more it sanctifies, and the more evidently doth the gospel appear to be divinely powerful to save us from sin and hell.

"Can I believe God has pardoned me, so vile a rebel, and forgiven me so many and aggravated offences, and yet is it possible I should not love him, and rejoice? Can I be assured he loves me, and not make him a return of my highest and warmest love? Can I believe that Christ the Son of God died for me, and shall I not consecrate myself and all the powers of my nature to him, that I may live devoted to his service? He has bought me with a price, a dear and valuable price, that of his own blood, and I must *glorify him with my body and with my soul, which are his*; 1 Cor. vi. 20. Can I believe that I am redeemed from hell and destruction, and shall I dare to walk in the road that leads to it? And not rather *run with patience* and joy *the race that is set before me*, till I arrive at the gates of heaven? Am I not assured that Jesus the beloved of God suffered death for my sins, and shall not I hate sin, which caused his suffering? Sin, which was the occasion of his agonies, and the very sting of his sorrows! *I am crucified* and dead to sin, and to this world, by my union with a crucified Saviour, *yet I live*, saith the divine apostle, *and the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God who hath loved me, and given himself for me*; Gal. ii. 20. How is it possible that I should hope to be made like Christ in glory, with a full assurance of arriving thither, and not *purify myself as he is pure*; 1 John iii. 2, 3. While I believe and am persuaded that the promise of the joys of heaven shall be fulfilled to me, I would awaken myself hourly to the joyful prospect, and be ever preparing for the possession of that blessedness."

Thus when faith arises to a sublime and eminent degree in

s world, the believer may be said to *rejoice with joy unspeaka-*
, and full of glory, and to receive the end of his faith, even the
vation of his soul; 1 Pet. i. 8, 9.

Before I pass to the second head, I desire leave to make
ese few remarks.

Remark I. Though the first degree of faith or assent to the
spel be necessary to salvation, yet it is not of itself sufficient;
d though the last degree of faith or assurance be gloriously
eful in this work, yet it is not absolutely necessary.

A mere assent to the truths of the gospel is not sufficient to
ve; for there are many who by the force of education, or by
e force of argument, yield their assent to the doctrine, and be-
ve it to be true, yet it is a cold, feeble, languid assent; it be-
ns and ends in the head, and never reaches the heart; it does
t awaken them thoroughly, nor make them long after the par-
n and the grace promised: They seem to sit still contented
th the forms of their catechism, and a general belief of the
ristian religion, so far as they know it; but are under no
inful solicitude, or concern of soul, about the forgiveness of
eir sins, the sanctification of their natures, their interest in
e favour of God and eternal happiness; and therefore they
oceed no farther, they never heartily apply themselves to
sus Christ the only Saviour, and they fall short of the bles-
ng. The devils believe as much as they do, but are in a state
damnation still.

Again, consider that a full assurance of our own interest
the favour of God through Jesus Christ, is the highest degree
attainment on earth; but it is not necessary to the being of
ristianity, nor doth it belong to every christian. It is true in-
ed, that every one ought to seek after it by the frequent exer-
e of faith and love, and every grace, thus brightening the
idences of his saving interest in the blessings of the gospel
ily; and where assurance is obtained upon solid grounds, holi-
ss and joy will rise by swift degrees, and the soul will make
orious advances towards the heavenly state and complete salva-
n: But some christians scarce ever arrive at this attainment
l their days.

Since therefore a mere assent to the gospel in general is
t sufficient for salvation, and a full assurance of our own inter-
t is not necessary, it follows, that an affiance or trust in Christ
a Saviour is the most essential and important act of faith.
his is that sacred and appointed duty of a convinced soul,
hereby it is made partaker of the blessings of salvation accord-
g to the gospel, if it be practised in the way which I have just
efore described.

II. Take notice here of the difference between the law and

the gospel, between the covenant of works, and the covenant of grace. The one gives us life upon our working, the other saves us from death, and gives us a right to heaven upon our believing, therefore one is called *the law of works*, and the other *the law of faith*; Rom. iii. 27.

It is proper here to observe, that the scripture sometimes speaks of two covenants; the old and the new: and means chiefly the œconomy or dispensation of the Jews under Moses, and the œconomy of Christ, or the dispensation of the gospel since the Messiah came. But by the two covenants I now speak of, I would be understood to mean the law or constitution of innocency, and the constitution of grace.

By the constitution, or law of innocency, man was to have obtained eternal life before his fall; and as this law or covenant was given to Adam as the head and representative of all mankind, so every son and daughter of Adam continues under it till they accept of the covenant of grace, or the offers of the gospel, either in the darker or brighter discoveries of it: And therefore all mankind, Jews and Gentiles, are laid under condemnation by it in the writings of St. Paul, in the second and third chapters to the Romans. By this law of works, *every mouth is stopped, and the whole world is become guilty before God*; Rom. iii. 19. Though the nations of the Jews and christians, and perhaps the greatest part of the heathen world, have had some revelations of the gospel or covenant of grace, and have been under the outward offers of it; yet Jews, heathens, and national christians, are all under the sentence of the covenant of the law of works, till they enter into the covenant of grace by repentance and faith in the mercy of God.

But the covenant of grace, or the gospel is a new constitution, which God hath ordained for the relief of poor fallen miserable man, condemned and perishing under the curse of the law of works. It is a constitution of grace, whereby alone fallen sinners can obtain salvation.

The law of works demands universal obedience to all the commands of God, obedience perfect and persevering; for this is the language of it; *the man that doth them shall live in them*; Rom. x. 5. and it curses every sinner without hope or remedy; *cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them*; Gal. iii. 10, 12. But the voice of the gospel, the righteousness of faith, or the way of justification by Christ, speaketh on this wise, *With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation; for the just shall live by faith*; Rom. x. 10. Gal. iii. 11. The one proclaims eternal life to all that perfectly obey, the other publishes salvation to all that believe, though their obedience be very imperfect.

I grant indeed, that the apostle cites these descriptions of ıe law of works out of the books of Moses, and therefore some ersons would suppose him only to mean the particular law given ı the Jews at mount Sinai, and not the general covenant of orks made with Adam, and with all mankind in him.

But to this I give these two answers:

1. The laws of works, which the apostle speaks of in the pistle to the Romans, particularly in the second and third chapers, cannot signify merely the Jewish law; for it is such a law s includes all the heathen world, as appears plain; *Rom.* ii. 14, 5. and by which the heathens as well as the Jews were condemed, and could never be justified; Rom. iii. 20. *By the deeds f the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight, for by the law is he knowledge of sin*; therefore this must be a law that extended ı all mankind, since it stops every mouth, and proclaims the rhole world guilty before God.

2. The law given to the Jews, or the covenant of Sinai, so ar as it is purely political, was indeed a covenant of works; nd their continuance in, or rejection out of the land of Canaan, lepended upon their own works, their obedience or disobedience o this law, as it is often expressed in the writings of Moses: And upon this account it is used sometimes by the apostles as a ery proper emblem or representative of the covenant of works nade with our first father Adam, who was to have enjoyed or forfeited some earthly or heavenly paradise, according to his obedience or disobedience. It is plain then, that though St. Paul may ite the law of Moses to shew the nature of a law of works in geıeral, yet it does not follow that he means only the law or covenant of Sinai; and it is as plain, by his including the Gentiles ınder it, that he does not mean the law of Sinai, but the original aw or covenant of works made with all mankind in Adam their ather and their head, and of which the law of Sinai was a proper emblem or figure.

All laws of works therefore are insufficient for the salvation of sinful man, and his restoration to God's favour and image, and eternal life. The law of Sinai was a law of works, promising an earthly Canaan to the obedient Jews. The law of innocency in Eden was a law of works, promising life and immortality to obedient mankind. But they have been both wretchedly broken; man was turned out of paradise, and the Jews out of Canaan, because of disobedience. But now the gospel whereby the Jews or Gentiles are to be saved, or to obtain eternal life, requires faith in the mercy and promises of God in and through Jesus Christ; and by this means it saves us, though our obedience be far short of perfection: This was the way whereby the Jews themselves were saved under the Old Testament: for the

gospel was preached to them as well as unto us; Heb. iv. 2. though it was in darker hints, and types and figures. And in this way were Abraham and David justified as the apostle teaches; *Rom.* iv. 3, 4, 5, 6.

Though the Jews' enjoyment of the land of Canaan depended on their good works and obedience to the law of Moses, yet their hope and enjoyment of heaven depended on their faith or trust in the mercy of God, which was to be farther revealed in the days of the Messiah. And it is the same gospel by which we are to obtain salvation, since Christ is come in the flesh; but with this difference, that we are now more expressly required to make Jesus Christ the object of our faith, and we have a thousand clearer discoveries of his righteousness and grace than ever the Jews were favoured with.

Happy mankind! though fallen and ruined in Adam, yet recovered and raised to righteousness, grace, and glory by Jesus Christ. How dreadful is that law which pronounces a curse and death upon every transgressor! *Tribulation and wrath, indignation and anguish upon every soul that doth evil, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile;* Rom. ii. 9. But how sweet and reviving is the grace of that gospel, which becomes the power of God to the salvation of every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek!

The great and blessed God saw the frailty of his creature man, how ready he was to ruin himself under a law of works; therefore he appointed his recovery by the law of faith. And *what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the infirmity of flesh, that he has sent his own Son Jesus Christ in the likeness of sinful flesh,* to do for us, to fulfil all the demands of the law, both in the penalty and the precept, *to finish transgression, to made an end of sin,* by his own sufferings, *and to bring in an everlasting righteousness, that whosoever believes on him shall be saved.* Blessed God! How kind and condescending are thy ways to the children of men! How full of compassion to rebels, who had destroyed themselves! How gentle are the methods of thy recovering mercy! If we will but confess our sins, mourn over our own follies, return to the Lord our God by humble repentance, and put our trust in an almighty Saviour, there is peace and pardon, there is grace, and life, and glory provided for us, and laid up in the hands of Jesus Christ our Lord.

III. Though the gospel offers us salvation by faith and not by works, yet it effectually secures the practice of holiness since holiness is a part of that salvation. We are saved from sin as well as from hell by this gospel; and we must have our souls prepared for heaven, as well as brought to the possession of it. He that pretends to trust in Christ, for a deliverance from hell

ıd has no desire to be made holy, he has no desire after such salvation as Christ proposes in his gospel, nor is he like to tain it.

We must be sensible then of the corruption of our natures, e perverseness of our wills, the vanity of our minds, the earthıess of our affections, our inability to do that which is good for ne to come, as well as our guilt, condemnation and misery, cause of our transgressions past: We must desire that a thoıgh work of repentance may be wrought in our hearts, that e power and reign of sin may be broken there, and that we ay become new creatures as well as desire to escape the wrath God, and hell, and eternal death, if ever we would be parkers of that salvation which the gospel proposes. Christ will t divide one part of his salvation from the other: And in vain we presume to trust in him for happiness, if we are not willing be made holy too.

How false and unreasonable are all the reproaches that are st upon the doctrine of salvation by faith, as though it tended promote looseness of life, and to indulge iniquity; when that ry salvation includes in it a freedom from the power of sin, and delight in all that is holy? This is the very character of Christ r Saviour, and the reason of *his name Jesus*, that *he should ve his people from their sins;* Mat. i. 21. If we are *delivered Christ*, it is *from this present wicked world*; Gal. i. 4. If we e *redeemed*, it is *from all iniquity, that we might be a peculiar ople purified to himself, zealous of good works;* Tit. ii. 14.

IV. Though the gospel is such a glorious doctrine of grace, ıt there is no reason to be ashamed of it, yet since it saves us faith, and not by works, there is no reason for us to boast ıen we are saved. We may *glory* indeed *in the cross of Christ* d make our boast in the Redeemer all the day long; but the spel for ever cuts off all ground of boasting in ourselves. Here e justice and mercy of God shine forth gloriously; here the hteousness of God is declared, sinners find remission or parn, *God is just*, and *a justifier of him who believeth in Jesus. here is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of rks? Nay, but by the law of Faith*; Rom. iii. 25, 26, 27. *grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should ast*; Eph. ii. 8, 9.

The gospel concurs with the law in this respect, that it shews our own guilt and vileness, our ruin and our impotence to res e ourselves, and therefore it has put all our help upon another. d has *laid our help upon one that is mighty to save;* Ps. lxxxix. . and he has ordained that the way whereby we should derive s salvation, is by renouncing all dependance upon self, and trust-

ing in Christ and grace for all that we enjoy and hope for. This is the business of faith; this is the very nature of that Christian virtue, to disclaim all self-sufficiency, and receive all from mere mercy; and therefore it is appointed to be the means of our justification under the gospel; therefore it is said so often in scripture, that we are *justified by faith*, that divine grace may have all the glory; *Rom.* iv. 16. Therefore it is of faith, that it might be of grace. We are ignorant and foolish, and must derive wisdom from Christ: We are guilty, and must receive righteousness from him: We are unholy, he is the spring of our sanctification: We are captives and slaves to sin and Satan, and we must have redemption from him: *He is made of God to us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, that no flesh might glory in his presence,* but *he that glories, must glory in the Lord;* 1 Cor. i. 29, 30.

Man, innocent man, had power and righteousness, and life put into his own hands; but the first Adam grew vain in his self-sufficiency, and he foolishly sinned, and lost it all: Therefore God, in order to our recovery, would put power, and righteousness, and life into the hands of another, even his own Son, the second Adam, that we might go out of ourselves, and seek it all from another hand. Now faith, or trust, is the proper act of the soul, to express our own emptiness, and our dependance on another for all.

This is the language of faith, "Lord, I am a sinful and guilty creature; I have no righteousness, no merit, to recommend me to thy favour; I have no power to change my unholy nature, and rectify the criminal disorders of my soul; I am unable to subdue the sins that dwell in me, or practise the required duties of holiness; I deserve condemnation and death, and I am by nature walking in the way to hell: helpless and hopeless for ever in myself, but in thy rich grace is all my hope: I rejoice in the discoveries of thy mercy; I come at the call of thy gospel, upon the bended knees of my soul I accept of the proposals of thy grace; I give up myself to thy power and mercy, as it is revealed in Jesus Christ, thy Son, that I may be saved from sin and hell. To me belongs nothing but shame and confusion of face; I renounce for ever all self-sufficiency, and if ever I am saved, thy grace shall have all the glory." Now when a poor humbled sinner is brought thus far, and receives the salvation of God in this lowly posture of soul, the great God has obtained a good part of his designs in the gospel upon him; self is humbled, grace is glorified, and the sinner is saved by faith.

V. Heaven is made up of believers. The whole number of the saved were once sinners, and obtained salvation by faith.

The holy angels indeed never sinned, and yet whether their

ıfirmed state of holiness and glory is not secured to them by ıst or dependance on Christ, may be a reasonable enquiry; for *l things in heaven and earth are* said to be *gathered together, and conciled in him;* Eph. i. 10. Col. i. 20. But this we are sure , that not one of all the race of Adam hath been restored to the ve of God, or raised to heaven, by their own works but all by ıth. It is sovereign and glorious grace that has saved them all, ıd that by the gospel too, in the various editions of it, from the omise in Eden, till the full discovery of grace at the day of pen- ost after the ascension of Christ.

O it is a pleasing entertainment of soul to send our thoughts ward to the last great day, or to send them upward to the urts of heaven and glory, and to hear how the millions of re- emed sinners shout and sing to the honour of divine grace? ow all that happy world of believers assist the melody, and dwell on the delightful sound. "*Not unto us, O God our Father, t unto us, but to thine own name,* and to thy mercy be all our nours paid through the ages of eternity. We were a race of ılty and perishing rebels, who had sinned against thy majesty, ıd ruined our own souls: We lay upon the borders of death ıd hell without help, and without hope: We could do nothing procure thy love, nor merit any thing by the best of our works: ut thou hast called us to believe thy gospel, to trust in thy grace, ıd to lay down the arms of our rebellion, and to receive the essings of salvation by faith: We have nothing to boast of, for e are mere receivers: Thou hast put forth thine almighty arm, d hast made thy gospel the instrument of thy power to save us; ıd while we feel and taste the complete salvation, thy power and y mercy shall have all the praise.

Not unto us, O Lord Jesus our Saviour, not unto us is any onour due; but to thy condescending love; to thy compassion ıd death shall our honours be paid, and our acknowledgments ade for help. We saw ourselves helpless, and were directed to ee for ever: We trusted in thee, and thou hast saved us: it is y sufferings that have procured our pardon; it is by faith in thy ood we find an atonement; it is through thy righteousness that e are justified and accepted of God, and made partakers of ese heavenly glories that shine all around us. All our sacred mforts, our excellencies, and our joys are thine. Pride is hid- n from our eyes for ever, and boasting is banished from all our ngues: It is thou hast fulfilled the law: it is thou hast suffered e curse; it is thou hast purchased, and promised, and bestowed e blessing. We believed thy word, we received thy grace, and hold, we, dying sinners, are raised to life, and advanced to lory. There is not a soul of us but delights to join in these sub- me anthems of worship; *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to*

receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing: Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be to him that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever." Amen.

HYMN FOR SERMON XVIII.

Faith the Way to Salvation.

NOT by the laws of innocence
Can Adam's sons arrive at heaven;
New works can give us no pretence
To have our ancient sins forgiven.

Not the best deeds that we have done,
Can make a wounded conscience whole:
Faith is the grace, and faith alone,
That flies to Christ, and saves the soul.

Lord, I believe thy heavenly word,
Fain would I have my soul renew'd;
I mourn for sin, and trust the Lord,
To have it pardon'd and subdu'd.

O may thy grace its power display,
Let guilt and death no longer reign;
Save me in thine appointed way,
Nor let my humble faith be vain.

SERMON XIX.

None Excluded from Hope.

Rom. i. 16.—The Gospel of Christ,—it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

WE have seen the gospel of Christ vindicated in the former discourses on this text, and the glorious doctrines of it guarded against the various reproaches of an unbelieving world: We have heard what a powerful instrument it is in the hand of God for the salvation of perishing sinners. We have been taught the way to partake of this salvation, and that is by believing; and we have learned what influence our faith has in this sacred concernment. I proceed now to the last thing which I proposed, and that is to shew the wide extent of this blessing of the gospel; for it brings *salvation to every one that believes, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.*

Where the word Greek is used in opposition to the Barbarian, as it is in the fourteenth verse before my text, it signifies the learned part of mankind, as distinguished from those that are unlearned; the Greeks being the most famous among the nations for wisdom, knowledge, or learning in that day: But when this same word stands in opposition to the Jew, as it does here in my text, then it includes all the heathen world, so that when the apostle says, the gospel brings salvation both to the Jew and the Greek, he shews the extent of this benefit to all mankind that hear and receive it.

It may be worth our while to spend a few hints upon the order in which the apostle represents the communication of this blessing, *viz.* to the Jew first, and then to the Greek or Gentile.

When he describes, in the second chapter of this epistle, the terms or conditions of the covenant of works, he sets mankind in the same order; he pronounces *indignation and wrath upon every soul that doth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile*; *but glory, honour and peace to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile.* So when he declares the blessings of the covenant of grace or the gospel, he brings the salvation first upon the Jews, and then upon the Gentile nations: And one reason of it may be this, that the Jews having been favoured with an earlier and more express discovery of the nature and will of God than the heathens, they seem to stand fairest for the par-

ticipation of divine blessings and that, even by the law of works, if life and righteousness could have been obtained by it, as well as by the covenant of grace, or law of faith. But if they abuse their knowledge, and their sacred advantages, to the neglect of God and godliness, faith and works, they justly fall under a more severe condemnation every way, because their guilt is greater.

But there may be some special reasons given why God thought it proper, in the course of his providence, to send the notice of this salvation by Jesus Christ among the Jews, before he sent it to the Gentile world.

I. The Jews were the chosen people of God, the sons and daughters of Abraham, his friend, the first favourites of heaven, considered as a family and a nation: and as he first preached to them the purity and perfection of his law, whence they might discover their own sin and misery, so he published his gospel of grace by Jesus Christ first among them, and sent his Son with the messages of peace and forgiveness first to their nation. The great God thought it becoming his equity to publish his abounding mercy first toward them, amongst whom he first published his law, to shew them their guilt and misery through the abounding of sin: "By the law is the knowledge of sin; and where sin has abounded, grace has much more abounded;" Rom. iii and v.

II. The Jews had this same gospel preached to them many ages before in types and emblems, in sacred ceremonies and dark prophecies. Now it was fit, that the types and prophecies should be explained and the grace contained therein revealed first to them; for hereby the gospel obtained a great confirmation, and established its own truth, when it appeared in all the parts of it so exactly answerable to the ancient figures, and to the predictions of many hundred years. It was fit that the Messiah should appear among them first, where his character and picture had been drawn for many ages before, that so he might be known and distinguished whensoever he should visit the world. It was fit that his doctrine should be first published in plain language, where it had been long written and spoken in metaphors. Thus the gospel went forth first from Jerusalem, that it might be preached and proclaimed with more glorious evidence among the rest of the nations.

III. Jesus Christ, who is the subject and substance of the gospel, was himself a Jew, of the seed of Abraham, of the nation of Israel. He was born, he lived, he died amongst them. All the great affairs of his birth, his life, his ministry, his death and resurrection, were transacted in their country, and in the midst of them. It was fit the benefit thereof should be first offered to them.

If this gospel of Christ had been first preached to the gentiles, while it was kept silent and secret amongst the Jews, there might have been reason to suspect that there was some fraud or falsehood at the bottom, and that this doctrine would not bear the light in the country where these things were done, and that it would not stand the test of examination in the land of Judea, and therefore the story was told first among strangers: And thus the gentiles might have found some difficulty to receive it, and been prejudiced against the belief of it. But now, when it is published through all the land of Israel, and the apostles appeal to their own countrymen for the truth of these transactions; when it has stood the test of public examination there, where the things were transacted, it goes forth to the rest of the nations with brighter evidence and glory.

IV. I might add in the last place, that it was fit it should be first published to the Jews, who seemed to have the first claim to it; that since they refused it, it might be offered to the poor gentile nations with greater justice and equity, even the Jews themselves being judges. Such are the frequent hints given by St. Paul; Acts xiii. 46. *It was necessary that the word of God should have been first spoke to you; but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and they will hear it;* Acts xxviii. 28.

When we think of that poor unhappy nation, the Jews, scattered abroad among all the kingdoms of the earth, banished from their own promised land for their rejection of Christ, and yet hardened in their unbelief, methinks we should send out a groan of pity for them; for they are the sons and daughters of Abraham, the first favourites of our God. Jesus our Saviour was their Messiah, their kinsman, and their rightful king. We should send up a kind wish to heaven upon their account, "How long, O Lord, how long shall Israel be cast off? How long wilt thou be angry with the children of Abraham, thy friend? When shall the day come for the opening of their eyes, that they may *look on Jesus whom they pierced*, and believe *and mourn?* When shall *the veil be taken off from their hearts*, that they may read the books of Moses, and trust in Jesus of Nazareth, whom their fathers crucified?"

When we see one and another of the Jewish nation in this great city, and think of their blindness and their zeal for the idle traditions of their teachers, and observe their ignorant rage against our blessed Saviour: when we behold the vain superstitions of their worship, the thick darkness that hangs upon them under the brighest beams of gospel-light, and their wide distance

from salvation, we should let our eyes affect our hearts, and drop a tear of compassion upon their souls. "These were they to whom the promises of salvation did first belong, and to whom the first news was brought, that *Jesus the Saviour is born.* These are they to whom the gospel was first preached. God himself dwelt in the midst of them, and the Son of God was their brother, their flesh and their blood. Though they are for a season cast off for their infidelity, yet God has told us, that he has a secret love for that nation still for their father Abraham's sake; Rom. xi. 28. and this love shall break forth in its full glory one day. Make haste, *O deliverer,* who didst *come out of Zion,* make haste to fulfil thy promises, and *turn away ungodliness from Jacob.* Let the *fulness of the Gentiles be brought in, and let all Israel be saved.* Bring them back from all the lands whither thine anger hath scattered them. Release thy ancient people from their long captivity to Satan, and their bands of thick darkness. Be thou, O *Jesus, who art the light of the Gentiles,* be thou also *the glory of thy people Israel.*"

But I would endeavour to make a larger improvement of this general head of discourse.

Does the gospel bring salvation to every one that believes without exception: to all ranks and characters, and degrees, and orders of men? then let this grace be spread far abroad: And let not the more polite and nicer hearers grow tired, or drowsy, or disdainful, while I amplify a little and diffuse my thoughts into various particulars, pointing out the variety of the subjects of this grace; for I would, as it were, mention every sinner by name, that they may not be left only to unaffecting general notions, but being especially addressed they may all come and partake of this salvation by believing this gospel.

A glorious and extensive gospel indeed, and a wide-spreading salvation? To *every one who believes!* None excluded from this blessing!

1. It is not confined to one nation, or one family, not to one tribe or kindred of mankind, as the law of Moses was. *Go preach the gospel,* says our Lord, *to every creature;* Mark xvi. 15. *Preach repentance and remission of sins in my name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem*; Luke xxiv. 47. To the Jew first, but let not this grace be confined to them: Publish this blessed doctrine also to the sinners among the Greeks and Gentiles. You that are afar off from God, even in the *ends of the* earth, ye are called to *look unto Christ: and be saved;* Is. xlv. 22. It is no matter, O sinner! what thy father was, or what thy kindred are! if thou art but a believer in Christ, thy soul is happy, thy sins are pardoned, *the gospel is the power of God to thy salvation.*

2. It is not confined to one sex only, or to one age. The ildren are called as well as the fathers, and men and women e invited to partake of this blessing together in Christ. *There neither male nor female,* neither young nor old, neither Greek r Jew, that have any distinction put upon them, to exclude em from this grace; *they are all one in Christ Jesus*; Gal. iii. . Children, have you seen the evil of your sins, and the dan- r of hell? Do you long for pardoning and saving grace, and e you willing that Christ should make your peace with God, at he should enable you to serve him upon earth, and prepare u for heaven? Come then, trust in this gospel, give up your- lves to Jesus Christ the Saviour in the manner I have spoken, d the salvation is yours. Nor let old sinners thrust away this rcy from them, under a pretence that they have long abused You are now under the joyful sound of the gospel; you sit w under the language of inviting love: Are you willing to be ade new creatures before you die, and to accept of a deliverance m hell, though you are upon the very borders of it? Behold wer enough in this gospel to deliver you: The blood of Christ n wash out stains of the longest continuance; The Spirit of rist can change the skin of an old Ethiopian, and create an l inveterate transgresssor into holiness. This gospel could ve the thief upon the cross, and ensure paradise to him. It can scue a dying rebel from eternal death; for it gives life and sal- tion to every one that believes.

3. It is not limited to one rank or condition of men in the vil life, but reaches to persons of every circumstance. The rich d the poor, the master and the servant, the prince and the pea- nt, must partake of salvation by the same faith in the Son of od, The barbarian and the Scythian, who seem to be born for aves, and the Romans who are lords of the earth, *the bond and e free,* have all an equal call to receive this salvation; Col. iii. 11. e are all rich enough to obtain it: There is no purchase of hese blessings by any other price but that of the blood of Jesus. ilver and Gold, and the treasure of kings, are all contemptible ffers in so sacred a concernment as this is. The benefit is too aluable to be bought at any meaner rate: Christ, who paid for , will bestow it freely on all. If the rich will receive it, they ust come without money, and without price, and accept of the ee gift of God, as humble petitioners at his footstool; and the or *that have no money, come ye and buy*; Is. lv. 1, 2. Let e vilest, meanest creature come to this treasury of grace, and ith thankfulness receive the salvation, for it is bought already. ou are called only to trust in this gospel, to surrender your- lves to this Saviour, and the salvation shall be yours. Ye ut are mean and low and base in this world, there are many of

your brethren already joined in the fellowship of this gospel: Come, enter yourselves into the blessed fraternity. *To the poor the gospel is preached,* and the poor receive it. But there are some noble, there are some great, there are some rich, that have felt the power of it too: There is Philemon the master, and his servant Onesimus, joined in the same faith, and partakers of the same salvation; Philem. 16.

Again, 4. It is not confined to persons whose intellectual excellencies are superior to their neighbours, or who exceed others in understanding and the acquirements of the mind. St. Paul was *debtor both to the wise and the unwise;* to the learned Greek, and to the ignorant and unpolished barbarian; Rom. i. 14. He preached the gospel to all of them: For Christ had a chosen number amongst them all. If the witty, and the wise, and the learned will lay down their pride, and submit to the doctrine of Christ crucified, and not call it foolishness: If they will humble their understandings to receive the sacred mysteries of our religion, *God manifest in the flesh,* and put to death for the sins of men, and will place the concerns of their eternal welfare into the hands of him who hung bleeding upon the cross: If they are willing to *be converted and become as little children,* there is a door for them to enter into the kingdom of heaven. And as for you, whose understandings are weak and unpolished with human learning, this is a doctrine and a gospel exactly fitted for your character: It is no business of great sagacity, no ingenious matter to become a christian. Believe the truths that are plainly revealed concerning your own sin and misery, and the power of Jesus Christ to save you; bewail your own wretchedness and guilt, and entrust yourselves in the arms of his grace, that ye may be made holy and happy, and ye also shall become possessors of the same kingdom. *Father, I thank thee, Lord of heaven and earth, that though these things may be hidden from the wise and the prudent, yet thou hast revealed them to babes;* Mat. xi. 25, 26.

But I pursue the distributions of this grace yet farther:

5. No particular tempers or constitutions of men, no different qualities of soul or body, can exclude those that believe from the grace or blessings of this gospel. *Let not the strong man glory in his strength,* nor the comely figures of human nature boast themselves in their beauty. Let not the weak be overwhelmed with despair, nor the deformed or uncomely stand afar off and abandon their hopes; the same Saviour proposes the riches of his grace to all. Learn therefore to look upon all your natural advantages, and all your natural discouragements, with a negligent eye in the matter of your salvation. If you would be strong to

win heaven, you must borrow all your strength from Christ and the gospel. If you would appear comely and honourable before the face of God, you must be clothed in *the robe of righteousness, and the garments of salvation*, which he has prepared; Is. lxi. 10.

Nor can any difference in the natural qualities of the soul forbid any person who believes in Christ to hope for this salvation. Those who are by nature proud or peevish, sullen or passionate, angry or revengeful, have been made partakers of this grace, as well as those who by the complexion of their animal frame, and the original temper of their minds, have had more of the natural virtues belonging to them; such as gentleness, meekness of spirit, good-humour and kindness. Those who have something in their very frame that is sly and crafty, or covetous, wanton, and intemperate, have felt the power of this gospel, as well as those that have been generous and sincere, modest, chaste, and abstemious; for the grace of the gospel, which was typified by the ark of Noah, takes in all manner of animals, clean and unclean, and saves them from the deluge of divine wrath that shall come upon an ungodly world. But there is this blessed difference, that the brutes went out of the ark with the same nature they brought in: but those who come under the protection and power of this gospel by faith, they are in some measure changed, they are refined, they are sanctified. The wolf that came in, is turning into a lamb, and the raven by degrees becomes a dove, surely, the gospel has begun to make them so, for it has begun their salvation.

I will grant indeed, that the perverse temper of blood and spirits, and the very make of the man, as to his natural and vicious qualities, is seldom entirely altered by the grace of God here on earth. There will be some sallies of animal nature, some out-breakings of the irregular fire that is pent up in the constitution; and these will too often mix themselves with our conduct, and interline our acts of virtue and duty. But the holy soul, who believes in Christ, will be humble, will mourn, will accuse and chide itself before God in secret, and will be importunate and restless in prayer for the victory. The christian will not suffer himself to be carried away willingly by the stream of vicious inclinations; for *he that is born of God sinneth not*; 1 John v. 18. and it is in vain to talk of the gospel and salvation of faith and grace, if we give up the reins to vicious nature, and bid a careless farewell to any one virtue.

But to proceed yet farther in reckoning up the various characters of men, whom the gospel makes christians by the grace of faith.

6. As no persons are excluded because of their natural con-

stitution, so neither are any forbid the blessing of salvation because of their former ill characters in the moral life. Not the greatest of sinners are shut out from this blessing, if they repent and believe the gospel. Not the Jews who crucified the Lord of glory: Not the Gentiles or Greeks, who were slaves to superstition and idolatry, and drenched in most infamous and abominable practices; the Greeks, who gave themselves up to work uncleanness with greediness without God, and without hope in the world. One gospel has saved them all. No former follies or faults, no, not the greatest of sins against man, or against God himself, ought to shut up a humble soul under despair; for *this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came to save the chief of sinners;* 1 Tim. i. 15. And that is a word of most extensive grace which our Saviour speaks; Mat. xii. 31. *All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.*

You who have enjoyed a happy education, and had pious parents to boast of, as the Jews boasted of Abraham; you who have many shining works of sobriety and righteousness, you are called to come and trust in this gospel: But you must renounce all your pretended merit, and accept of pardoning grace, or you can never be saved. And you that have nothing that looks like a good work to glory in, sinners as bad as the worst of Gentiles, come, and believe this gospel, and surrender yourselves to Jesus the Prince and the Saviour; his blood is all-sufficient for the pardon of your sins, his righteousness is all-sufficient for your justification; and his Spirit can purify your sinful natures. *Where sin has abounded, grace has much more abounded*; Rom. v. 20. It is to the everlasting honour of *the gospel of Christ*, that it has appeared to be *the power of God to the salvation* of multitudes of such as you: *Such were some of you*, saith the apostle to the *Corinthians; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God*; 1 Cor. vi. 11.

And surely if great degrees of sin cannot exclude the penitent soul from the benefit of the gospel; then, 7. Neither shall any person be excluded because of the weak degrees of his faith; *Him that is weak in the faith, receive ye; for Christ has received him*; Rom. xiv. 1—3. Read that kind condescending promise, and believe it; Mat. xii. 20. *He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoaking flax*, nor suppress, nor despise the least, the lowest desires of grace: He will encourage the youngest and the feeblest acts of sincere repentance and true faith, though struggling under much sin and darkness, till it break out into evident and active flame. The little tender seed of grace under his heavenly influences shall bud, and blossom, and spring up into full glory.

How large and glorious is the salvation that attends faith in this gospel! How extensive is the grace of God our Saviour! How unsearchable are the riches of his mercy! *O the heights and the depths, the lengths and the breadths of the love of Christ, that pass all knowledge!* None of the sons or daughters of Adam the sinner, are excluded from this salvation, where the gospel is preached, but those who exclude themselves by stubbornness and unbelief. Persons of every kind, every character, condition and quality, amongst men, have found this *gospel become the power of God to their salvation*, when they have fled to this refuge, and believed in this Saviour.

What improvement now shall I make of the last part of his discourse, this wide extent of salvation bestowed on all who believe? Has every single believer this salvation in some measure conferred on him, and wrought in him? Then here is a plain and evident test, whereby to try our faith, or a certain sign whereby we may judge, whether we are true believers, or no.

The gospel is the manifestation of the power of God for the salvation of every one that believes. What have you found of this salvation begun in you? What have you felt of your own guilt and wretchedness by reason of sin, and of your danger of eternal death? Have you seen the death of Christ as an effectual atonement to procure the forgiveness of an offended God? Have you beheld the power and grace of Christ sufficient to renew your sinful natures, and to form them after the image of God in righteousness and true holiness? Have you found your conscience resting upon the sacrifice of Christ, and your souls humbly expecting pardon and peace there? Are your hearts turned away from every sin? Is the temper of your mind made divine and heavenly, and suited to the business and blessedness of the upper world? This is the salvation of Christ which the gospel proposes, and bestows upon all that believe.

Upon such solemn enquiries as these, I am persuaded there is many a soul must take up this heavy complaint, "Alas! I fear I am no believer: I have sat long under the sound of the gospel, and I have heard the doctrine of Christ crucified many years to no purpose; for I have never found this gospel attended with any such powerful impressions as to begin salvation in me. I have been too thoughtless about the guilt of my sins, and about the forgiveness of them in the court of heaven. Nor have I found my sinful nature changed, nor my affections sanctified. I have very little of these spiritual desires and delights which have been

before described as part of my salvation, I feel the inward workings of my soul vain and carnal still; I am not prepared for the heavenly world, and surely then I have never truly believed in Christ, nor received his gospel."

To such complaints as these, I would propose these three several answers:

Answer I. It may be so indeed. All this complaint may be just and true; and perhaps thou art an unbeliever still, dead in trespasses and sins, and exposed every moment to the stroke of death, and to everlasting misery. This is the case of many a thousand beside thyself: Even the greatest part of those who are called christians, are yet afar off from God and from salvation, and have no just ground to suppose that they are believers in Christ. But it is of infinite concern for thee, O sinner, to busy thyself about this enquiry. There is not any one act in thy life, in which thou canst be engaged, that is of greater and more awful importance than this; for thy heaven or thy hell depends upon it.

Some sit all their days under the gospel, and hear nothing but the outward sound, always unmoved, unawakened, and unaffected; slumbering and nodding upon the borders of eternal fire; while others hear the voice of the Son of God, arise from the dead and receive a new, a divine life. Some in the same family, perhaps of thy own kindred, thy flesh and blood, or some that are upon the same seat in the public assembly, are convinced and converted, believe in Christ, and are saved; while thou remainest a hard and impenitent sinner under the voice of the same grace, and the preaching of the same salvation.

And if this be thy case, it is a dreadful one indeed. Consider, how will thy condemnation be aggravated, that thou has heard the gospel published with so much glorious evidence i such a land, and such an age of light as this is, and yet tho abidest in the state of impenitence, and unbelief, and death Thou hast had the blessings of heaven offered at thy doo and hast hitherto refused to receive them. Thou hast sat, a it were, on the banks of the *river of life*, and never desire to taste the *living water*. Thou hast dwelt near the shado of the *tree of life*, but art an utter stranger to the fruit. O with what a stupid and a careless ear hast thou heard th things of thy everlasting peace! Think of it therefore, and b horribly afraid: If the gospel be not powerful for the salvatio of thy soul, it will become through thy own impenitence, a power ful means to increase thy damnation, to make thy hell hotter and thy eternal sorrows more intolerable, *Wo to thee*. Capernaum *Wo to thee* Bethsaida! Wo unto you, O sinners of Great Britain, ye have been exalted to heaven in divine favours, and ye shall be

thrust down to hell, if ye continue in unbelief. *It shall be more tolerable in the day of Judgment for Sodom and Gomorrah, than for you;* Mat. xi. 21.

But art thou indeed yet an unbeliever? Yet sleeping the sleep of death? It may be this is thy awakening time: It may be this is the hour when thou shalt begin to hear the voice of God in order to life. O cherish such important thoughts as these. Let them arise with thee in the morning, let them lie down at night with thee, and give thyself no rest, nor give rest to the God of heaven, nor to Jesus Christ the Saviour, till he has received thy soul into the arms of his love, forgiven thy sins, and made thee a new creature, that the gospel may not be to thy soul the savour of eternal death.

II. But perhaps the person who makes this complaint, may be some humble, melancholy christian, some sincere believer in Christ, and yet under dark and timorous apprehensions, concerning his own state. It may be, poor trembling soul, that thou hast found the preaching of the gospel to be the power of God to thy salvation, though thou art not able rightly to evidence it to thy own conscience.

Thou hast not the joy of pardon indeed, but hast thou not some glimmering hopes? Surely thou dost not abandon thyself to utter despair? Thou hast not assurance that Christ has accepted of thee; but art thou not sincerely willing to surrender thyself to him, to receive his complete salvation in the holiness as well as the happiness of it? Dost thou not long to be pardoned and accepted of God, for the sake of his death and obedience? And art thou not heartily desirous to give him all the honour of thy salvation? Thou hast not much power against sin, but dost thou not hate it with immortal hatred, and esteem it thy constant enemy? Does it not often cause thee to mourn before the Lord, because of thy captive state, and the working of in-dwelling iniquities? Perhaps thou dost not yet feel thyself to be manifestly saved from sin, but art thou not saved from the love of sin? It dwells in thy flesh, it may be, and raises tumults there, but not in thy desire and thy delight. Canst thou not say with the apostle; Rom. vii. 23, 24. *There is a law in my members warring against the law of my mind?* But it is a daily torment to me, *O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me?* Thou dost not love God, it may be, according to thy wish and desire; but is there any thing which thou valuest more than God and his love? Art thou not truly willing to love him above all things, to be renewed and sanctified in all the powers of thy nature, to be fitted for the business of heaven, and suited to the blessedness?

If thy heart can echo to this sort of language, and the grace of God has prevailed thus far in thee, then thy salvation is begun; the gospel has shewn its divine power upon thee, and thou art indeed to be numbered among the believers.

III. But I would conclude my discourse with a word that may have equal respect to saints or sinners. If you are concerned sincerely about your eternal welfare, but can see no comfortable evidences in yourselves of the work of faith, or the beginnings of salvation, if all within you appear to be guilt and sin, and there is much of hell and darkness in the soul, yet do not cast away all hope: Arise and come to Jesus the Saviour, behold he calleth you. This is the season of the grace of the gospel, *This is the accepted time, this is the day of salvation.* Make haste now to the city of refuge, fly now to the hope that is set before you.

The promises are held open to thee, O soul! whosoever thou art, even the promises of light and life, of grace and eternal glory. Christ Jesus invites thee by the messengers of his gospel: If there be some darkness upon thy Spirit, do not spend all thy time in laborious and fruitless enquiries whether thou hast heretofore believed in Christ, or no; but come now with an humble sense of thy guilty and sinful circumstances, and surrender thyself to his charge and care by a new act of faith, or trust, or dependance. Plead with him to accept a vile criminal overloaded with guilt and misery, and to make thee accepted with God by a righteousness which was not thy own. Beseech him to look with pity on thy unholy soul, to sanctify and renew it, to take thy hard heart into his hand, and soften it into repentance. Plead with him, and say, Lord, art not thou exalted to give repentance as well as remission? Entreat of him to subdue thy sins, to new-mould and create all the powers of thy nature in the beauties of holiness, and to prepare thee for the heavenly state. Go and complain humbly at his mercy-seat, how long thou hast sat under the ministry of his own gospel, and felt no divine power attending it. Intrust thyself now to his care, and place thyself by faith under his divine influences. *He that comes* in this manner, *shall in no wise be cast out*, for the Lord has promised to receive him John vi. 37. Wait on him with daily importunity, follow all the means of grace which he hath appointed, and the gospel of Christ shall appear in due time to be the power of God, even thy God to thy salvation. *Amen.*

HYMN FOR SERMON XIX.

None excluded from Hope.

ɜ, thy blessings are not few,
is thy gospel weak?
race can melt the stubborn Jew,
heal the dying Greek.

as the reach of Satan's rage,
h thy salvation flow:
ft confin'd to sex or age,
lofty or the low.

grace is offer'd to the prince,
poor may take their share:
ɔrtal has a just pretence,
perish in despair.

Be wise, ye men of strength and wit,
Nor boast your native powers;
But to his sovereign grace submit,
And glory shall be yours.

Come, all ye vilest sinners, come,
He'll form your souls anew:
His gospel and his heart have room
For rebels such as you.

His doctrine is almighty love;
There's virtue in his name,
To turn the raven to a dove,
The lion to a lamb.

SERMON XX.

Christian Morality, viz. Truth, Sincerity, &c.

PHILIP. iv. 8.—Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, *or grave*, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

Οσα εςιν αληθη, &c.

FAITH and practice make up the whole of our religion: A sacred compound, and divinely necessary to our happiness and our heaven! Nor does the blessed apostle in any of his writings ever dwell so entirely on one of them, as to forget the other. In this letter to the saints at Philippi, practice has the largest share. Through every chapter he scatters up and down particular directions for the conduct of those believers who dwelt among the gentiles; but he gives them two general rules, by which they were to walk. The first is in the beginning of his epistle; *Philip.* i. 27. *Let your conversation be as becomes the gospel.* Act always agreeable to the temper and design of that gospel, which brings salvation by Jesus Christ, and then you will certainly practise every virtue of life; your carriage can never be amiss.

And toward the latter end of his letter he saith, *Finally, brethren*, before I take my leave of you, I would give another general rule to direct your practice: I would recommend holiness to you under another view, and describe it in such colours and characters. as will not only approve themselves to your fellow-christians, but even to the heathens among whom you live, *that you may be*, as he expresses it in *chap.* ii. *ver.* 15. *that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke in a wicked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world*; that they that have a mind to speak evil of christianity, and cast what reproaches they can upon the doctrine of the cross, may not be able to find any flaw in your conversation, or any ground to slander the doctrine which you profess.

The rule is this, whatsoever the light of nature, and the better sort of heathens, esteem true and honest, or decent, and just, and pure, and lovely, and of good report, let these things

be your meditation, let these be your constant aim and design, let these be the business of your lives, and your perpetual practice: Think of these things, says the apostle, and think of them so as to perform them.

In a day wherein the professors of christianity, and of the glorious doctrines of the gospel, grow degenerate and loose in their lives, and fall sometimes into vices, which the better sort of the heathens have utterly condemned, I think it may not be amiss to stir you up together with myself to all holy watchfulness and caution; that christianity in our profession and in our practice may appear and shine in its own bright raiment; *that the doctrine of God our Saviour may be adorned in all things*, and that it may look, as it is indeed in itself, a doctrine according to godliness.

Without any further preface, or division of the words, I shall take these several sentences in the text, as so many distinct characters of morality, or virtue, which the apostle recommends; and in discoursing of each of them, I shall follow nearly the same method; *viz.*

I. Shew the sense, latitude, and extent of the duty.—II. Make it appear, that these duties are required by the law of nature.—III. Discover what additional influence the gospel should have upon our consciences to the meditation and performance of such duties; and sometimes,—IV. I shall give directions toward the performance of them, and guard against the contrary sins.

Whatsoever things are true.—The first thing that the apostle mentions is this, whatsoever things are true, let these be our meditation, and our practice.

First, Let me shew the sense, latitude, and extent of this advice.

Truth in general lies in a conformity of one thing to some other which is made the standard or rule of it. So a picture is said to be true, when it is conformable to the face and figure of the person: So a copy of any writing is true, when it is conformable to the original. So a narrative or history is true, when it describes matters fairly as they were transacted, and tells the circumstances just as they are. And that is true doctrine which is conformable to the word of God, which is the rule and standard of divine truth.

But none of these agree to the design of my text. For the apostle here is describing moral characters, and the duties of a christian. Truth in this place is not so much to be considered as seated in the understanding, as it is in the will. It signifies here integrity and uprightness, in opposition to hypocrisy, insincerity,

or moral falsehood. And there are three things that make up the perfect character of truth or integrity:

1. That our words be conformable to our hearts.—2. That our deeds be conformable to our words.—3. That our whole carriage be conformable to itself, and consistent with itself at all times, and in all places.

1. The first thing wherein this virtue consists, is in the conformity of our words to our hearts. This is sometimes called veracity, sometimes sincerity; a necessary duty that belongs to every christian, and that in all the affairs of life. We must be sincere in all relations of matters of fact; in all the narratives or accounts we give of either persons or things, in all our discoveries of our esteem for other men, and in all our professions of love and good-will to others. Whatsoever we speak, it ought to be agreeable to the sentiment of our souls.

Let us first consider what is that truth that is required in relating matters of fact, and narratives concerning things or persons. This is what Solomon mentions; *Prov.* xii. 17. *He that speaketh truth, sheweth forth righteousness; but a false witness deceit.* In the xvth Psalm, ver. 2. it is the character of one of those who shall inhabit the holy mountain of God, that he not only worketh righteousness, but he speaketh the truth in his heart. That which he thinks in his heart to be true, he clothes it in words, and thus delivers it out to his fellow-creatures. The apostle in *Eph.* iv. 25. makes mention of the same duty, and presses it upon those to whom he writes; "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour; for we all are members one of another:" Members one of another, as we belong to the same original, as we are born of the same first parents, as we are made of one flesh and blood, as we are parts of the same civil society or nation, and especially as we that profess christianity are related to one another in nearer and diviner bonds, as we are members of the general church or body of Christ. Now it does not become those that are joined in so near a relation to lie and speak falsely, and deceive one another, no more than the members of the natural body should do injury to each other, whose single welfare lies much in the welfare of the whole body.

I grant it is possible for the best and wisest of men sometimes to be mistaken in their apprehensions of things, and they may happen to speak something that is false in the course of their conversation: for they may be deceived themselves, and not know the truth. But in matters which they have occasion to speak of, they ought to be as well informed of the truth of things as present circumstances will admit, and to say nothing to their neighbour but what they really believe themselves. When we speak a

thing which we sincerely believe, and it happens not to be true, that is properly called a MISTAKE, for we had no design to deceive the person we converse with. But when we speak the thing that is false, and we know it to be false, or do not believe it to be true, this is wilfully to deceive our neighbour; and is properly called by the odious name of LYING.

It is granted also, that no person is always obliged to speak all that he knows, when he is giving an account of some particular affair or concern of life. There are several seasons, wherein it is a piece of prudence to be silent, and not to publish all the truth. We have a most remarkable instance of this in the prophet Jeremiah, when he had been admitted to the speech of Zedekiah the king, and had given him divine counsel, that he should submit himself to the Chaldeans, and save his life, and preserve the city from burning, and at the same time had intreated for himself, that he might not return to Jonathan's house and the dungeon, lest he died there. A little after, the princes of Israel demanded of him what discourse he had with the king; he concealed his chief business from the princes, which was about submission to the Chaldeans, and told them that he *presented his supplication to the king, that he would not cause him to return to Jonathan's house, so the princes left off speaking with him, and the matter was not perceived;* Jer. xxxviii. 24, &c. There may be various occasions in life, wherein it is proper to keep ourselves upon the reserve. Silence is much commended by Solomon, who was made divinely wise; Prov. xxix. 11. *A fool uttereth all his mind; but a wise man keepeth it in till afterward.*

Yet it must be confessed too, that sometimes the concealment of part of the truth, when it is necessarily due to the hearer, in order to pass a right judgment of the whole, is almost as criminal as a lie: And herein consists the guilt of partial representations. But I cannot stay to discuss this point at large.

The great rule of veracity in general lies in being just and fair in our narratives and representations of things and in saying nothing but what we believe to be true. Whatsoever therefore we have to speak to our fellow-creatures, let us lay a charge upon our consciences perpetually, that we speak according to the sentiments of our hearts; and remember, that what disguises soever our tongues put on, God our Judge sees through them all.

And not only when we relate matters of fact, but when we express our sentiment of the characters of men, let us be just to truth. I confess, brotherly love generally requires us to put the most favourable colours on a blemished character, and say the

softest things that the matter will bear; love covereth a multitude of faults and follies, and in this case silence often becomes us best. But when providence and duty requires us to speak, no pretences of love or charity are sufficient to excuse a falsehood.

Again, when we have a bright character upon our tongues, or when we are paying civilities to our neighbours or friends, let us take heed of being lavish beyond what truth will allow. The sins of complaisance may be connived at or applauded by men, and miscalled by the name of good breeding; but the eye and ear of God take a juster and more severe notice of the softest and smoothest falsehoods.

In all the discoveries of our esteem for other men, let us speak no more than we in our hearts believe. It is a character of a very vicious time, and a very degenerate and corrupt age, *Ps.* xii. 2. "They speak every one with his neighbour, with flattering lips, and with a double heart do they speak; but the Lord shall cut off all flattering lips, for he hates them," ver. 3. They speak flattery with their tongue, while at the same time their throats are open sepulchres, and they, it may be, attempt to waste, devour, and destroy. This character of the basest of men you read in the vth Psalm; and you find the same hateful practice among the Jews in their deepest degeneracy; *Jer.* ix. 5. 8. "They will deceive every one his neighbour, and will not speak the truth. One speaketh peaceably to his neighbour with his mouth, but in heart he layeth wait for him." But this which was so abominable in a Jew, surely a christian ought to stand at the greatest distance from it at all times.

As in discovery of our esteem, so in the profession of our love and good-will to our neighbour, we must observe truth. When your heart is not with your neighbour, be not profuse of the language of friendship. *Let love be without dissimulation;* Rom. xii. 9. Let love be sincere to your fellow-creatures, and love to your fellow-christians be upright and cordial. Let not that affection appear in a flourish of fine words, if it be not warm in your soul. This is the first character of truth, that our words agree with our hearts.

II. The next instance of the truth required in my text, is, when our deeds are conformable to our words: And this is called faithfulness, as the former is called veracity or sincerity. Faithfulness or truth, in this sense, has respect to our vows, our promises, our resolutions, or our threatenings.

1. Vows are properly made to God alone: And when they are made, if the matter of them be lawful, they ought to be performed. "When thou vowest a vow, defer not to pay it.

etter it is thou shouldst not vow, than that thou shouldst vow, d not pay; Ec. v. 4, 5.

2. Promises of things lawful made to our fellow-creatures, ust also be fulfilled with religious care. As for things unlawful, ey ought not to be promised. We bind ourselves to perform at we promise, and the law of God binds us as well as the laws social life. In the xvth Psalm, ver. 4. it is another of the aracters of him that shall inhabit the mountain of God, *that he eareth to his own hurt, and changeth not;* that is, he makes a omise to his neighbour, and though it be much to his own dis- vantage, yet he doth not alter the word that is gone out of his s, nor make a forfeiture of his truth by breach of his promise.

We should remember, that when we bind ourselves by a omise to give any good thing to another, or to do any thing r the benefit of another, the right of the thing promised passes er from us to the person to whom the promise is made, as much if we had given him a legal bond, with all the formalities of gning and sealing; we have no power to recal, or reverse it ithout his leave. Always except the promise be made with a ndition expressed, or necessarily and evidently implied; then deed, if the condition fail, the promise is void. But the lips of christian, when they have once uttered an absolute promise, have id a bond upon his soul; and he dares not break the law of his od, though the law of man should not bind him.

3. The case of threatenings is somewhat different. A pro- ise makes over the right of some benefit to another who may istly claim it; but a threatening only shews what punishment hall be due to another for such a particular fault or offence. If superior propose and publish a law, and therein threaten an nferior with some penalty, the superior is supposed to be at iberty, whether he will execute the threatening of his own law, r no: for the criminal will not claim it. Thence arises the power f a superior to pardon a fault.

But if over and above the proposal and publication of this law, a father, for instance, or a master, does solemnly foretel or declare that he will certainly execute the penalty upon the child or servant offending; I think he ought generally to esteem him- self bound to fulfil such a declaration or threatening, if it were made in a prudent and lawful manner; unless the repentance of the offender, or some other change of circumstances, give him a just reason to change his mind and alter his purpose.

And in the fourth place, the case is much the same when we nake a solemn resolution, and publicly declare it, that we will do uch or such a thing in time to come. If this resolution be so- emn and public, and be in all respects lawful, it should generally e performed; unless some other circumstances arise, which we

did not foresee, or which escaped our present notice when the resolution was made: otherwise we justly expose ourselves to the censure of fickleness, inconstancy, rashness, and folly: And such a conduct seems to intrench upon truth. But this leads me to the third or last instance of truth.

III. Another part of the character of truth is, when our whole carriage is conformable to itself. When we are always of a piece with ourselves, and our conduct is still consistent with our own character and profession. This is called constancy.

Something of this might have been introduced indeed under the first or second particulars, when I shewed how our words should agree with our hearts, and our deeds with our words; for both these demand that our practice should correspond with our profession. But I choose to cast all that I have to say on this subject under the head of constancy to our professions and pretences, which implies a perpetual and persevering honesty of thoughts, words, and actions, and a regular consistency with ourselves. Now that I may throw this matter into the easiest method, I shall shew how this exercise of christian truth will appear in a good man at all times, in all conditions of life, in all places, and in all companies.

1. At all times a good man is the same: He ever maintains the same pious and religious design, and having set his face heavenward, he travels on in the sacred narrow path, and never wilfully turns aside to the right-hand or to the left: Or if at any time he makes a false step, he recovers it again with humility and shame, and repentance, and his feet return to the ways of holiness.

Here let it be observed, that a good man may change his practices in some lesser points of christianity, and alter his principles too in doctrines of less importance, and yet he is not to be charged with criminal inconstancy or falsehood: For he never renounces all improvement of knowledge, but is ever ready to receive further light, and to retract his former errors and mistakes: And indeed this is one glorious evidence of his being a constant friend to truth. But being well established in the necessary and fundamental points of faith and practice, he walks on regularly in his christian course without wavering, or wandering into forbidden paths, ever pursuing his last great end: And this is a constant christian, though his sentiments, in the latter part of his life, may differ in several points from the thoughts of his youth.

When the eye of the world smiles upon his profession, and the sun shines bright upon his party, or when the clouds arise, and the sharp winds of persecution blow, he is still the same steady christian, composed, quiet, undisturbed; not doubtful what he

ould do, but aiming at heaven, he marches on homewards, with regular discharge of all his duties to his God on high: nor es he forget his obligations to his fellow-creatures on earth, ough in twenty instances they may forget or refuse to fulfil eir duty to him. His supreme obligations are to God his Maker, d to these he must be true and faithful.

How various were the trials that St. Paul met with from the ws, and from the Greeks, from the Jewish christian, and the athen converts? But how bright and blessed an uniformity n like a golden thread through his whole life and ministry? ear the holy man often in his writings declaring his own stedfast herence to the gospel: Hear him appealing to his Ephesian sciples concerning his own conduct, and proving it to their con-iences, that he had in some good measure acquitted himself cording to this rule of christianity; *Acts* xx. 18. When the lers of Ephesus were come to him, *Ye know*, says he, *that from e first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been th you at all seasons*, and that was by the space of three years, in ver. 31. *serving the Lord with all humility of mind, with any tears and temptations that befel me:* And I was constantly stifying to the Jews and Greeks, *faith and repentance, and unned not to declare the whole counsel of God to you, coveting no an's gold or apparel*, &c. I have shewed you now, that for ese three years together I have maintained the same holy con-ict, that so you might follow my example, that ye might always t agreeable to yourselves, and be constant to your own virtuous d holy character.

But what an inconstant christian is he who changes his inciples and practices, being blown about with the wind of pre-iling party, and the humour of the times? Who seems active the cause of religion, when religion is the fashion of the age; it he grows ashamed of every part of godliness, when the times rn upon him! His religion dies, when piety is discouraged in e world, and a saint becomes a name of reproach! To-day r the God of Israel, and to-morrow among the worshippers of aal! Now a zealot for pure doctrine and worship, anon so kewarm and indifferent about every thing of religion, as though had no place near his heart! Multiplying duties of godliness e week, and grossly negligent of all duty the next! To-day reaching and practising the rules of christianity, and to-morrow lking and living like a man of heathenism? True and constant nothing, but to his own fickle temper and inconstancy!

Is it not a glorious character when we can say of a good an, that "all that have known him give him a good word; that ose who have lived many years with him, and seen him in his guarded hours, and in the undress of life, pronounce him the

same man as he appears in the public world." They who have known him longest, admire him most and love him best, and they bear a noble testimony to his virtues, and his graces. His graces and his virtues advance with his years, they imitate the morning sun, which keeps the same steady pace through the heavens, but rises hourly, and shines with a brighter lustre, and with warmer beams. "The path of the just, like the morning light, shines more and more unto the perfect day; Prov. iv. 18.

But what a wretched satire it is upon any man to say, "If you see him for an hour his talents will surprize and please you, but if you have a year's acquaintance with him, his evil qualities are so many and so hateful, that all his charms vanish, and he sinks and loses all your esteem?" So a torch blazes high when it is first kindled, but the flame grows lower as it burns, till it expire in stench and smoke. Where such a censure is just, or such a simile well applied, the man is far from that fair character of truth and constancy which the gospel recommends.

2. A true christian is the same in all conditions of life. Let the favours or the frowns of men attend him, or the awful providence of God make a surprizing change in his affairs, still he ceases not to look and live, to speak and act like a christian. Is it not a very honourable account that you have heard sometimes given of a person in the height of prosperity, and in the depth of afflictive circumstances, that he is still the same man? That he maintains his probity and his integrity, and every virtue, in the midst of all the revolutions of providence! Serene and chearful, calm, peaceful and heavenly, holy and humble amidst them all! St. Paul was eminent for this grace. "I know," saith he, "how to be abased and how to abound, to be full and to be hungry: I have learned to be content in whatsoever state I am," and to appear a christian under every change of circumstances; Philip. iv. 11, 12.

The man of truth and constancy, when he is exalted and walks upon the mountains of prosperity and honour, is not vain and haughty in his treatment of inferiors, nor does he look askew upon his former friends, nor cast his eye down with contempt on his meaner brethren. When his mountain shakes and falls, he descends calmly into the valley; but he is not of a mean, abject and desponding spirit: Ever mindful of his high birth as a christian, and of his heavenly home, he bears up with a sacred constancy of soul, with a generous contempt of this world, and all the vanishing honours and the uncertain possessions of it. His behaviour is ever true to his holy profession, and to his sublimest hope. Is not this a character which each of us wish our own? Is it not worthy of our aim and ambition, our daily pursuit and labour to obtain?

There are some christians that know not how to bear the

of providence: and some who are as much untaught to ne frown of it: For their piety is ever changing, as their istances are.

The first sort are they who are never very serious and de- out when they lie under the chastisements of God: They humble, penitent, and pious when the rod of heaven is upon but when that is once removed, they forget their sorrows eir seriousness together. Such were the rebellious and tant Jews of old, when the Lord slew them, they sought rly, and enquired after God; but they took every new oc- to murmur and rebel again: There was no truth in their n; "their heart was not right with God," nor "were they st in his covenant;" Ps. lxxviii. 34. "In trouble they l thee, O Lord, and poured out a prayer when thy chasten- s upon them; but their goodness was like a morning cloud, s the early dew, it vanished away;" Is. xxvi. 16. Hos.

here is another sort of men who behave well enough in s of virtue and religion when they are in peaceful and easy istances; but if once they are smitten in their flesh, in their ame or their estate, or have any of the comforts of life im- d to them, they grow peevish and passionate, and nothing ease them; they vent their impatience on their friends, and their vexation of spirit all around them, as though they ed to imitate that brutal character which the prophet men- *like a wild bull in a net*, struggling, and raving, and *full of* nder *the rebuke of the Lord*; Is. li. 20. Surely both these es are very contrary to that serene and uniform practice of odliness that becomes a saint.

. In all places, as well as in all times and circumstances, the ristian appears the same, and is just to his own profession. esoever he dwells, or sojourns, where he spends an hour or , he is constant to himself, and consistent with himself still. er maintains the same pious designs, and adorns and glori- e doctrine of the gospel in all things. When at home and ibroad, he is the same person. When at church paying his s and devotions to heaven; when in his own family among ldren and servants, or when in his shop and in the affairs ; when in the street or on the exchange conversing with the friends and strangers, known and unknown; when in his and secret chamber, still he is the same good man: still consistent with himself and his profession, still pursuing a r steady course of piety, and his dying pillow confirms the ty and practice of his life. Religion is ever uppermost in art, and all his affairs and businesses in the world, are ed with regard to his last great end. Thus though his ements and actions of life be very various daily, according

to the various calls of duty; yet his design is ever the same, and the rule that governs all his practices is the word of God, the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

How far from the glory of this character were the false-hearted sons of Israel in Jeremiah's time! They were guilty of stealing and murdering in the streets, or by-ways, or private-houses, *yet they came and stood before the Lord in the house which was called by his name*; Jer. vii. 3, 4, &c. There were also in our Saviour's days men of the same deceitful spirit, whom he frequently and sharply reproved under the odious name of hypocrites, who made long prayers in the temple, and in the corners of the streets; but devoured widows' houses, and neglected judgment, mercy and faith; who made clean the outside of their cup, but filled it with all extortion, luxury, and excess. You read their infamous manners at large in the vi. and xxiii. chapters of Matthew.

They had no more truth in them than whited sepulchres or flowery graves, fair indeed and beautiful on the outside covering, but all within is death, and horror, and rottenness. O, how inconsistent were the two pieces of this character one with another! How far from that truth and uprightness, that sincerisy and constancy, that the gospel requires, and so much approves of? What a most sharp and shameful reproach is it, and yet a righteous one too, that is thrown on some persons? They are saints at church, and devils at home!

It is pity we must borrow a word from hell to describe any sort of men that dwell on earth: I would not willingly apply it to any particular person living: But in describing a general character of this kind, we can hardly paint it in colours frightful enough. In public they are all meekness and innocence, all demure, and abstemious, and heavenly, and they *transform themselves*, as their father does, *into angels of light*; 2 Cor. xi. 14. but follow them to their houses, and you see a surprizing change: There luxury and riot, there fury and passion reign in every room, their dwelling is without God, without prayer, without piety or peace, and has more of hell than of heaven in it. *O my soul, come not into their secret*, to their family, *my honour, be not thou united!* for truth and goodness are far from them.

4. The true christian is the same in all companies: And though he does not think himself obliged to cast his pearls before swine, to give that which is holy to dogs, or to impose a discourse of religion upon those that hate it; yet he never forgets his religion in the worst of company, nor does he throw off the christian in the midst of heathens. The general course of his life shines in the beauty of holiness, and glorifies his God in an impious world. And there are seasons too, when he sees it neces-

ry to rebuke public iniquity, and bear a testimony against a ious age: *He has never any fellowship with the unfruitful rks of darkness*, but *rather he reproves them*; Eph. v. 11. Yet metimes his prudence directs his christianity to lie concealed, t he never dares do any thing that contradicts it. It is like a rment that he ever wears about him, though he does not always ear it uppermost: He keeps it ever as his guard, though he does t always expose his glory.

What a scandal is it to any person who professes the name of hrist, that he can sometimes lay aside all his christianity, and ry it in an hour of riot! That he can drink till midnight when gets among drunkards, and take his cup as merrily and as ten as they! That he can relish a lewd or profane jest, and ike one too, when he sits in the company of lewd or profane iters! That he can lisp out an oath, and stammer at a curse, perhaps he can swear roundly when he is in the midst of earing wretches! And yet he can pray and talk devoutly hen he falls into religious company, and pretend to tremble at e profaneness of the age. What shameful hypocrisy and falsehood is this!

There are some persons who have appeared in the country be professors of religion, and perhaps may have obtained a me of piety; but when they come up to the city among loose ertines, where their vices are better hid, they give themselves to loose practices, and indulge a licentious month or two. hey are pious amongst their acquaintance, and profane amongst angers. They have not impudence enough to be constant in e, nor have they grace enough to be true to virtue.

There are some that speak fair to the face of their neighour, and spread their compliments abroad before him; but hind his back, in other company, they are as liberal of their reoaches, and can hardly endure a good thing to be said of him. heir behaviour has brought an infamous word into the English ngue; for they are justly call backbiters.

There are some children that pay the utmost deference their parents in appearance and shew, and will not dare ny thing vicious while they are under their eye; but when they re mingled with their vain young acquaintance, they run into any extravagances, and give a loose to the wild appetites of the esh. But these are not the children of truth.

There are some servants who make their zeal and diligence appear while their master's eye is upon them; but they re mere eye-servants and false creatures, for when they are out f his sight, they can waste his substance among merry companions, and perhaps purloin and pilfer to gratify their own covet-

ousness, or luxury: or at best they make no conscience of acting for their master's interest, when he is absent.

Thus different company hath a different influence on the thoughts, the words, and the works of men: And some persons will run into every vice and folly, rather than to oppose their company; they had rather sin against God, and be false to their profession, than venture to be, what they call, rude and uncivil to company. So tender are they of giving offence to men, and so careless of offending the great and dreadful God!

There are some of all ranks and orders, of all sexes and ages of mankind, that seem to be sober, but have nothing of this divine virtue of truth or constancy in them. They would neither swear, nor drink, nor game, nor speak a lewd or impious word, when they are in a sober family: But when at any time they happen to come into houses without godliness, they can follow the course of the family in all manner of iniquities, and grow false to all their former appearances of goodness.

I might multiply instances of this kind, to shew what falsehoods and sly deceits are practised amongst men who call themselves christians, and how inconsistent many of their actions are with their own professions and pretences: But this part of my discourse hath already exceeded its just bounds. Yet I think I ought not to leave it till I have answered one objection.

Objection. It may be said here, does not St. Paul, one of the truest christians and the best of men, tell us, that when he was among the Jews, he became as a Jew, and appeared like one that was under the law: But when he was among the Gentiles, who were without law, he appeared like a Gentile too, for he was not willing to offend the one or the other; according to his own advice, *Give none offence neither to the Jews, neither to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God*; 1 Cor. ix. 20. and chap. x. 32. To this I answer,

The blessed apostle, when he had none but Jews about him, practised so much of the Jewish law as was consistent with christianity: When he had none but Gentiles with him, he declared his freedom and release from the bonds of the Jewish law, and neglected the Jewish ceremonies, for some parts of the Jewish law were now lawful for a season, though they were so far abolished that they were not necessary for a christian. And the apostle managed this affair with holy prudence, and with a religious design to ingratiate himself and his ministry, as much as possible both with the Jews and Gentiles for the salvation of both of them: For you find this was his great end, *I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some*; and *this I do for the gospel's sake*; ver. 22, 23.

Yet you may observe, that though he appeared free from e Jewish law when he was among the Gentiles, yet he did not rry it like a lawless man; but confined all his practice within e bounds of his duty to God and his Saviour, *being not without w to God, but under the law to Christ*; ver. 21. So that neither e sort of company nor the other tempted him to neglect any duty, to indulge any sin.

You may observe also upon another occasion, where Jews d Gentiles were both present, when he thought a conformity any of the Jewish customs might give greater offence to the entile christians, and be likely to do more hurt than good, he thstood Peter to the face; for his sinful compliance with the unaritable Jews: He reproved him for dissembling; and chid m because he *walked not uprightly, according to the truth of the spel*, and would not *give place to him by subjection; no, not for hour*; Gal. ii. 5, 11, 14, &c.

There are some seasons therefore when we may indulge an nocent compliance with our company in things lawful, in order do credit to the gospel of Christ, and make our profession apar lovely and honourable in the eyes of all: But there are her seasons when circumstances are so placed, that we may t indulge the same compliances, lest our liberty be construed to evil purpose, and we bring more scandal than honour to our ofession by it.

I grant there are some difficulties attending particular cases the christian life, and it is hard to know sometimes how far we ay go. It is no easy matter to tread in the apostle's steps, to come all things to all men, and yet be true to Christ. In the neral, let this be our great rule, to act always with honest al for the glory of God, and see that we please him in the first ace; and then as *far as possible to please all men, not seeking our n profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved*; 1 Cor. 31, 32, 33. And if while we endeavour to be true to God, we ould happen to be less complaisant to men, we shall certainly nd favour at the throne of God, and then we ought not to be ver-solicitous whether men be pleased, or no.

Thus I have finished the first general head, which was to ew the extent and latitude of this virtue, or what is included the nature of this truth, which the apostle recommends to chrisns. It contains in it veracity or sincerity, faithfulness and conancy: And a lovely character it is indeed, when it shines in its ll glory.

But it is time now to enquire, which of us can say, "This aracter belongs to me? Am I this true, this sincere, this faithl, this constant christian? Am I always careful that my words

are conformable to my heart, and express the honest sense of my soul; Do I speak nothing but what I believe to be true, and set a continual guard upon the door of my lips, lest they utter deceit and falsehood? Do I neither flatter my neighbour, nor spread a false report of him? Am I watchful to make no promises, but what I mean sincerely to fulfil? And am I as careful to perform my vows and all my engagements? Am I sincere in the profession of godliness, and constant in my practice of it at all times and circumstances, in all places and companies whatsoever?"

Let us ask our hearts again, "While we have heard this discourse, how many of us have sat here judging our neighbours, and not ourselves: Have we been distributing abroad the shameful characters of insincerity, falsehood, unfaithfulness, and inconstancy, among our acquaintance? Or have we applied the words as a test to our own souls, as a trial of our christianity? Have we taken a secret and malicious pleasure in fixing these scandals upon others? Or have we begged of God to fix the conviction upon ourselves if we are guilty? And which of us can stand up and say in the face of heaven, We are innocent, entirely innocent of all these charges?" O may the blessed Spirit, the Convincer and the Sanctifier, shew each of us our own concern in this sermon, awaken each of us to a sense of our own iniquities, and by his almighty grace work in us repentance, and restore us to truth and holiness!

SERMON XXI.

Christian Morality, viz. Truth, Sincerity, &c.

PHILIP. iv. 8.—Whatsoever things are true,—think on these things.

RUTH is a name of wide extent. It includes in it the essings of the head and the heart. Happy the man whose head furnished with a large knowledge of divine and human truth, d so far delivered from mistakes and errors, as to lay a foun-tion for wisdom and holiness! But all the furniture of the ad is not sufficient to make us truly wise and holy, without e honesty and integrity of the heart. Truth demands a om and place there also: And this is the truth which my text commends.

The first thing I proposed, was to shew the latitude and ex-nt of this duty—and I have described it as consisting in these ree things; 1. Veracity, which is, when our words are con-rmable to the sentiments of our mind. 2. Faithfulness, when r actions agree with our words. 3. Constancy, and that is nen our practices are consistent with our pious principles, and e whole course of our life is of a piece, governed by the same les and dictates of morality and religion. Where these are anting, that person is false, faithless, fickle, and inconstant, and ts neither agreeable to his nature as a man, nor to his character a christian.

The second thing I designed to shew, was that the light nature dictates and requires the practice of this virtue: nd it will appear, if we consider our relation either to God man.

I. If we consider our natural relation to God, both as our reator or Father, and as our Lord or Governor.

Consider him as our Father, the Author of our being. Truth nd faithfulness are the attributes of his nature, and the neces-ry characters of his conduct toward his creatures; and many f the heathens could tell us, that a likeness to God the Father of ur spirits, in such moral perfections of his nature, is the duty nd glory of mankind. We are his offspring, saith Aratus, a eathen poet; Acts xvii. 28. and children should be like their ivine Parent.

The light of nature tells us, that he is not only our Creator, and our Father in this sense, but he is our Lord and Governor also. And he has knowledge, and he has power to answer and fulfil this high character and station. The great God who looks into our hearts, who sees our souls through and through, he knows what our inward sentiments are while the falsehood is on our lips; he remembers what our engagements and contracts are while we renounce and break them; he hates deceit, lying, and falsehood; and all the civilized nations have ever supposed that he will avenge it with peculiar judgments.

It is upon this supposition of an all-knowing and avenging power, that oaths are administered in all countries which are reformed from utter barbarity. An oath is appointed to be the confirmation of truth in what we say or do. Therein God himself, with all his knowledge, his power and his terrors, is called upon to bear witness to what we speak, and to be an avenger of perjury and falsehood. Surely we might venture to say, that a day will come when the great and holy God will shew himself terrible to liars and deceivers, if we had nothing but the light of nature to tell us so.

II. If we consider our relation to mankind, truth will appear to be a necessary duty. Man is a sociable creature, he is made to love society; but no society can be maintained without truth: All falsehood therefore is inconsistent with the social nature of mankind, and consequently it becomes contrary to the law and light of nature. Without truth we should all become deceivers to one another, every man a liar to his neighbour. No contracts would be of any force; no commerce could be maintained; none of us would be able to trust another, nor could we live safe by those that dwell nearest to us.

He that indulges himself in lying, takes away his own credit, and gives sufficient occasion for his neighbour not to believe him, even when he happens to speak the truth; for a man that will lie and deceive sometimes, how can we tell that he is not dealing, deceitfully with us, even when he professes to be most faithful and true? And children should take notice of this, that if once they indulge the sin of lying, there is nobody will ever believe what they say.

A liar is such an abandoned character amongst mankind, that though there are too many who deserve the name, yet every one is ashamed of it. It is esteemed a reproach of so heinous and hateful a nature for a man to be called a liar, that sometimes the life and the blood of the slanderer has paid for it. The very nature of man resents it highly, for it implies in it, that a man

;uilty of this vice deserves to be cut off from all society with nankind, and to be thrust out of cities and families like a beast of the earth.

The same thing may be said of an unfaithful man, a man who makes promises, contracts, and agreements, and takes no are to perform them. All commerce and traffic is confounded, nd the laws of it dissolved, by a person of this shameful conduct. He that loses his credit and honour by this sort of falsehood, cuts imself off from many of the blessings of civil society, and stands s it were excommunicated from the friendship, the company, and ommerce of his neighbours among whom he dwells. His cha- acter becomes hateful among men, and his name is a word of andal and infamy. But where a man is true to his word, and unctual in all his correspondencies, how fair is his reputation! Iow honourable is his name! And he stands entitled to all the essings of the society where he resides.

I might borrow arguments also from the light of nature, to iew what an excellent virtue is that of constancy; how useful in ie whole course of life; how honourable a name does it gain a an in the world! With what a happy regularity his affairs pro- ed, both in his household and in his shop, or business of life! He aintains a sacred and steady peace of mind, and all men bless m: but the character of a fickle, wavering, inconstant man, is ways mean and contemptible: he is compared to a weather- ck, that is blown about by every wind: and his name is thus alted, or stuck on high, there to become a more public mark of st and ridicule.

The third thing I proposed, is to consider what are those lditional arguments that might be drawn from the gospel for the actice of this truth and sincerity, this faithfulness and constancy: or the gospel doth not only confirm all the duties of morality it the light of nature dictates, and establish all the reasons of em that the light of nature more feebly proposes, but it adds o many arguments and motives to enforce the same virtuous actices, which the mere light of nature knows nothing of; d I shall represent all these advantages of the gospel here. it I will not overload your memory with particulars, and there- e I shall speak them more generally, and heap them together; d may your souls and mine feel the united force of them!

It is a gospel of truth we profess, even the eternal truth of od revealed to men concerning our salvation and his glory. iere are a multitude of scriptures where the gospel itself is called e truth, and the word of truth; and it is a most inconsistent ng for the professors of this gospel to be guilty of falsehood.

God the Father is the God of truth; and never did he give so rious a demonstration of the sincerity of his love, of the faith-

fulness of his promises, and of the constancy of his compassionate design to man, as in sending his own Son into the world, according to his ancient prophecies of a thousand years, and bestowing upon us Jesus the Saviour.

Jesus Christ, by whose name we are called, *he is the true and faithful witness*; Rev. iii. 14. *Truth, and grace*, and peace, *came by him*; John i. 17. He is called the truth; John xiv. 6. He came down to *bring life and immortality to light by his gospel*; he came to tell us, and he well knew, that in *his Father's house were many mansions; and if it were not so, says he, I would have told you*: But it is not my business to be a deceiver to men: Therefore all the life, light, and immortality that I have discovered to you in my preaching, it is all sincere, it is all real. When you enter into the other world, trusting my promises, you will find all my words fulfilled. I would not have raised your expectations, if it had been otherwise.

Again, *the Holy Spirit is a Spirit of truth*; it is he that *guides us into all truth*; John xvi. 13. And the name of this Father, and this Son, and this Holy Spirit, is called upon us in our first admission to christianity. So that we wear the name of the God of truth upon us, and shall we indulge temptations to falsehood? Shall we practise deceit, who profess a gospel of such truth, and upon whom the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, the name of the God of truth is pronounced in baptism?

"By two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie;" that is, his oath and his promise, he hath established his covenant of grace, "that the heirs of salvation, might have strong consolation;" Heb. vi. 18. Hereby it comes to pass that we have a sure hope of eternal life; for "God that cannot lie hath promised it to us in Christ Jesus before the world began;" Tit. i. 2. and 2 Tim. i. 9. And though it was so long ago since the first promise was made, the first promise made to Christ before the foundations of the world, and the first promise made to fallen Adam a little after the foundations of the world were laid; yet our God hath not forgotten his promises and his covenant; he remains still faithful to fulfil every word of grace "that is gone is out of his lips;" Ps. lxxxix. 33, 34. And should not this oblige us to like faithfulness to our fellow-creatures, since God, who is so infinitely our superior, is pleased thus to bind himself by promises, and thus to fulfil them.

The constancy and immutability of God in his designs of mercy to sinners, should influence us to the practice of the same constancy of spirit in our professions of his gospel. God acts always like himself, conformable to the glory, and holiness, and dignity of his nature, so should we, who are the sons and daughters of the most high and holy God. He his uniform in his counsels and methods of grace and peace, he is unchangeable in his love, and always the same: "And Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever;" constant to himself, and consistent with himself in all the purposes of his mercy, and in all the prosecutions of those divine and eternal purposes in heaven and on earth. No alteration of circumstances, no change of place, from a cross on earth to a throne in heaven, can change his compassion and love to his saints. And shall we suffer our petty changes here on earth, from a higher to a lower part of a little mole-hill, to make such a shameful alteration in our conduct to our friends, as too often endangers our truth, and discovers our inconstancy?

Let us consider that by our profession of christianity we renounce deceit and falsehood, and all the hidden things of darkness: We are *children of the light*, then let us *walk in the light and do the truth*, and let our *deeds be made manifest, that they are wrought in God*; that is, in the faith and fear of God; *John* iii. 21. Why should a christian be a deceiver, when he bears the name of Christ the faithful and true? How inconsistent a character is it for a christian to be a liar? For a christian to be false, and violate and break his word? How dishonourable is it to the holy name we bear?

Let the children of Satan, who is a liar from the beginning, delight themselves in falsehood, and sport themselves in their

own deceivings: Let those who renounce all hope in the promises of God, imitate the devil, who is the father of lies: But let us who trust in the God of truth, who believe in Jesus the Saviour, and make his truth our hope, let us imitate our heavenly Father and our blessed Lord. Let us speak the truth and practise it. It was by a lie of the devil that our first parents were deceived and ruined: All our sin and misery sprung from that falsehood, *Ye shall not surely die.* And it is by our faith in the truth and promise of God that we hope for salvation. While we therefore remember either the spring of our ruin, or the means of our recovery, we should love the truth, and hate lying.

But there are motives of terror, as well as arguments of grace and love, that should ever influence us to sincerity and truth. We should remember that Christ our Lord has *eyes like a flame of fire, that he searches the hearts and the reins, and will render to every one according to their works;* Rev. ii. 23. We should remember the dreadful threatenings that Christ the faithful and true Witness, Christ the Lord and Judge of all men, hath denounced against hypocrites. You scarce find him preaching a sermon of any length, but he has one or more woes in it ready for those that practise hypocrisy.

There is no sort of sinners that he treats with such infamous names, and such killing reproaches as he does the hypocrite. They resemble the old serpent, the devil, in subtlety and falsehood, and therefore the language of Christ to them runs in this manner; Ye Jews, who are false to the inward conviction of your own consciences, *ye are of your father, the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do: He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him.—When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar and the father of it;* John viii. 44. It is as if our Lord had said, "The first lie that ever was made, was made by the devil; and by his telling a lie, and our mother Eve's believing it, he murdered mankind in Adam their head. And yet you false Jews would imitate him, and make him your father." And again, *Wo unto you scribes and pharisees, hypocrites,—ye serpents, ye generation of vipers,* sons of the old serpent, *how can ye escape the damnation of hell;* Mat. xxiii. 29, 33. Your eternal punishment is most just and unavoidable.

In another of his discourses he makes the punishment of hypocrites to be, as it were, the pattern of the punishment of the worst of wickedness. The *servant* who is intrusted with the household of his Lord, that shall *beat his fellows,* and *shall eat and drink with the drunken, his Lord shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrite; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth;* Mat. xxiv. 51. And when you read the

black catalogue of sinners, who are doomed to everlasting destruction; *Rev.* xxi. 8. the name of liars is put in with a peculiar remark, *the unbelievers, the murderers, the whoremongers, the sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.* As if he had said, whosoever escapes hell, no liar shall escape it, and it is repeated again in the next chapter, *Without the gates of* heaven *are dogs, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie;* Rev. xxii. 15.

Whensoever therefore we find a temptation to falsehood, let us set ourselves under the immediate eye of God our Judge, God *who shall bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and shall judge the secrets of every heart one day by Jesus Christ our Lord;* 1 Cor. iv. 5. Rom. ii. 16. If we did but always place ourselves as in the sight of the great and dreadful God, whose eye beholds every falsehood we practise, and all the hidden hypocrisy, the lurking deceit of the soul, whose ear attends to every word of falsehood we speak, and records it all in his book against that great and terrible day of account; surely we should find a more effectual influence of it upon our spirits, to guard us from such words and actions as are inconsistent with the sincerity of a christian.

And let our hearts be melted into repentance for our past iniquities of this kind, and moulded into the love of truth by a delightful meditation of the faithfulness of our Lord Jesus Christ to us, in performing his kind and dreadful undertaking to suffer for our sins. Let us dwell upon the thoughts of his faithfulness to all his promises, and think thus with ourselves, that he has engaged us to truth of every kind by the strongest bonds of duty and love: And if we are false and unfaithful to him in this world, how justly may he cut us off from all our glorious hopes and expectations in the world which is to come.

But this leads me to the fourth general head that I proposed; which was to lay down some directions how christians may be preserved in the ways of truth, how they may secure and maintain this blessed character of integrity and uprightness which I have described. And I think this may be better performed by distinguishing truth, or integrity, into those three distinct parts, under which I treated of it before, namely, veracity, faithfulness, and constancy, and by giving some rules for the preservation of each.

The rules to preserve veracity, or to keep our words conformable to our hearts, are such as these:

I. Be persuaded in your own minds, that no circumstances whatsoever can make a lie lawful. Though when a question is

asked, there are many cases wherein it may be lawful to turn the discourse aside, to wave a direct answer, to be entirely silent; or in some circumstances it may be both lawful, prudent, and proper, to conceal a part of the truth, as I hinted in the former sermon; yet in my opinion it is neither prudent, proper nor lawful, to speak a falsehood to deceive my neighbour. The whole truth may not always be necessary to be spoken to men; but such falsehood is always a sin in the sight of God. All lying is utterly forbidden; and the true meaning of a lie is, when we speak that which we believe to be false, with a design to deceive the person to whom we speak.

Here may arise two questions:—1. If I have a good and valuable end in speaking, and my design is to serve the glory of God, or the good of my neighbour, may I not then use the art of lying, or speak a known falsehood without sin?—2. Surely there are some sort of persons who have no right to truth, such as children, common liars, knaves or cheats; may we not therefore deceive them by direct falsehoods, either for their good, or for our own?

These are enquiries of very great importance to the honour of truth, to the satisfaction of conscience, and to the welfare of mankind: And it is my present opinion (and I think there is good reason for it) that none of these cases can make an express and deceitful falsehood to be lawful, or change the nature of a lie, and make it innocent; but to debate these two cases as largely as they deserve, would too much incumber the present discourse; I leave them therefore to be read with an honest and serious mind, as an Appendix to these sermons of truth, and so proceed to the next direction, how to preserve our veracity.

II. The second rule to preserve veracity is this; accustom yourselves to a sober, modest way of speaking, avoid all those methods of speech that border upon falsehood. I shall mention a few of them, to give sufficient notice of what I mean.

Some persons affect to be certain of every thing they speak, and pronounce all that they say with the highest assurance. If they are relating matters of fact, which they only learn by report, they tell you every circumstance without the least hesitation, and endeavour even in a dubious matter to make the hearer believe it with the highest confidence: They are never in the wrong, never doubtful, whether they are in the right no. If they are declaring their own sentiments of the most difficult subject, it is always as clear to them as the light, they are always as positive as if it were divinely revealed, and written in the most express words of scripture.

Now such sort of speakers will often find they have been mistaken; and if they have modesty enough to retract their

words, it is well: but for the most part they refuse conviction, and often persist to maintain their own error, even almost against their own consciences. In short, it appears to me, that a man who dares frequently to assert doubtful matters with the most positive air of assurance, has not so much tenderness about his heart, and such a religious fear of lying, as a good christian ought to have.

There are others again that affect to tell you nothing that is common, but would always surprize the company with strange things and prodigies, and all this out of the pride of their hearts, and an ambition to have their own stories applauded and admired by all that hear them. This sort of affectation oftentimes betrays a person into falsehood, and secretly and insensibly allures him to say things that are neither credible nor true. Sailors and travellers should set a special guard upon themselves in this respect.

There are a third sort of talkers, that when they discourse of common things, are ever expressing them in exalted and superlative language. If they speak of any thing small, it is prodigiously small; if they speak of any thing great, it is incomparably great. If they name a man of wisdom, he is the wisest man in the world; or a woman of piety, she is the only saint in the nation. An imprudent man with them is the greatest fool in nature; and a little disappointing accident in life, is an intolerable vexation. If they happen to hear a good sermon, the preacher was inspired, not an angel could exceed him: If it was a mean discourse, the wretch had not a grain of sense and learning. Every opinion they hold is divine and fundamental: All their own sentiments, even in lesser matters, are the very sense of Christ and his apostles, and all that oppose them are guilty of heresy or nonsense. Now persons who have accustomed their tongues to this language in common discourse, seem to want that due caution which the strict rules of godliness may seem to require, and make a little too free with truth. Either their thoughts are very injudicious, if they can believe what they say; or if they do not believe it, they should make their words agree better with their thoughts.

But besides the approaches to falsehood in this manner of conversation, there is something in it that is very vain, and almost ridiculous. Methinks such an extravagant talker is something like a man that walks upon stilts through the open street, or like one who wears a coat much longer than his neighbours; and how tall soever they may think themselves, the world will be ready to call one of them a child, and the other an idiot.

Objection. But are there not a multitude of such expressions in scripture in the books of Job, and the Psalms, and the Prophets, wherein even the more plain or common occurrences of

life are dressed up in very magnificent language, and in expressions that far exceed the truth of things? Does not David, in his elegy upon Saul and Jonathan, say, *they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions?* 2 Sam. i. 23. And even in St. John's history of the life and death of Christ, does he not suppose, *that if all things which Jesus did were written, even the world itself could not contain the books?* John xxi. 25.

Answer. It is the natural language of poetry and prophecy, and the custom of the eastern nations, to express things in a lofty and sublime manner; so that there is no danger of being deceived by that language, when a prophet or a poet indulges such figures of speech. Now the books of Job and Psalms, and David's elegy, are so many Hebrew poems. The business of oratory is a-kin to verse, and sometimes requires a figurative style. But in familiar language and common discourse, it is not the custom of mankind to use such extravagance of expression: The hearer is many times ready to be led into a mistake thereby, because he supposes the speaker to mean plainly what he says. And I would not willingly indulge a habit of expressing my thoughts in such a manner in common conversation, as should deceive my hearers, to humour a silly affectation.

As for the figure which St. John uses to represent the variety of useful things which were said and done by our Saviour, it is such as can lead no man into a mistake, for none can believe it to be understood in a literal sense. Besides, if one would indulge the most superlative expressions and boldest figures that human language can furnish one with, to set out the honours of any person on earth, there can be no such proper or deserving subject as Jesus Christ our Lord.

III. The third rule to preserve veracity is this, practise nothing which you are ashamed of. Do nothing that you need be afraid of the ear of the world: Walk carefully in the ways of virtue and duty: Fulfil your obligations to God and man to the utmost of your power: Venture upon no practice that needs a cover, a disguise, or an excuse; and then you will not be so often under the temptation of lying.

Let children remember this, and have a care of disobeying God, or their parents, even when they are alone; lest they be tempted to excuse their faults by lying, which indeed does but enlarge and double them, rather than diminish and excuse them. Let servants take notice of this, and pay all due honour and faithful obedience to their masters and governors? or else the devil, and their own corrupt hearts, will frequently join together and help them to lie for the cover of their guilt. Let every one that hears this discourse watch over all their actions, and confine them within the rules of religion; otherwise their practice, which will

ıt bear the light, will put them under a temptation to hide it be-
nd a refuge of lies.

And under this head I might particularly give this advice.
o not affect a cunning way of life. Do not aim at the character
a subtle and crafty man. Be not fond of being let into
crets, nor of engaging in intrigues of any sort. There are
me tempers of mankind that are naturally addicted to craft, and
e ever seeking to outwit their neighbours: they seldom live
on the square, or walk onward in an open path; but are still
ubling, and turning, and traversing their course. They take a
ecial pleasure in managing all their affairs with art and subtilty,
d call it necessary prudence. But if you would shew your-
lves tender of the truth, and preserve it, let your course of life
bold, and free, and open. There is much prudence to be used
our daily conduct, without this crafty humour. The integrity
a man will preserve him, and keep his tongue from falsehood;
ıereas a man who is much engaged in crafty designs, will now
d then be tempted to intrench upon truth, and come near the
ink of lying, to carry on and cover all his secret purposes.

Methinks I could pity rather than envy the high station of
urtiers. How often they are constrained to put on disguise, to
lour or to conceal their real designs! How near they walk
the borders of falsehood, and tread hourly upon the very edge
a lie! David, the man after God's own heart, while he kept
ı father's sheep, was more secure from this temptation; but
ıen he became a courtier and a king, he was often exposed, and
erefore he begs earnestly, that God would *remove from him*
: way of lying; Ps. cxix. 29. He had felt the mischievous in-
ence of this snare, and dreaded the pernicious power of it.
ı be ever practising the politician at home and abroad, is a
nstant snare to sincerity; and to live as a spy in a foreign court,
ıy be a post of service to our own nation; but it is exceeding
ngerous to virtue and truth.

IV. Have a care of indulging any violent passion, for that
ll tempt the tongue to fly out in extravagance of expression, and
ıt-run the settled judgment of the mind. Whether it be grief
impatience, or anger and resentment, it will engage the soul to
rm ideas far above and beyond the truth of things, and often
m the tongue with unruly expressions, even beyond the senti-
ents of the heart. Strife and contention, and noisy quarrels
e very dangerous enemies to truth.

And upon this account, above all things, I would warn young
ristians to avoid the excessive zeal of a party-spirit in the lesser
fferences of religion. There has been often a great deal of
rkness, and fire, of rage, and deceit, and falsehood in such sort
f quarrels as these. Men of natural warmth, animated by an

honest zeal for God and religion, taking it into their head, that every doctrine besides their own is damnable heresy, and all forms of worship different from their own, are superstitious or schismatical, and abominable in the sight of God; they have, under the influence of these principles, kindled their passions to a flame: and to secure the reputation of their own party, or vindicate all their principles and practices, they have made shameful inroads upon truth, even in relating matters of fact; and as Dr. Tillotson well expresses it, that the zealots of all parties have got a scurvy trick of lying for the truth; though he confesses he has never observed any that would be so very fond of a false report, or hug and caress a lie as the papists have done. And I wish no protestant had ever followed their example.

I should proceed now to lay down rules how persons may best preserve their faithfulness to vows or engagements of any kind. But this may be reserved to the next discourse.

HYMN FOR SERMONS XX AND XXI.

Christian Morality, viz. *Truth, Sincerity*, &c.

LET those who bear the christian name
Their holy vows fulfil:
The saints, the followers of the Lamb,
Are men of honour still.

True to the solemn oaths they take,
Though to their hurt they swear;
Constant and just to all they speak,
For God and angels hear.

Still with their lips their hearts agree,
Nor flattering words devise;
They know the God of truth can see
Through every false disguise.

They hate th' appearance of a lie,
In all the shapes it wears;
Firm to the truth: and when they die,
Eternal life is theirs.

Lo! from afar the Lord descends,
And brings the judgment down;
He bids his saints, his faithful friends,
Rise and possess their crown.

While Satan trembles at the sight,
And devils wish to die,
Where will the faithless hypocrite,
And guilty liar fly?

SERMON XXII.

Christian Morality, viz. *Truth, Sincerity*, &c.

PHILIP. iv. 8.—Whatsoever things are true,——think on these things.

WHEN we are ever so well informed in the nature of our duty, we still want arguments to make our consciences feel the obligation. Flesh and blood are frail and sinful; grace is feeble and imperfect in the present state; temptations surround us in this lower world, and are ever ready to allure or affright us from the paths of holiness: we have need therefore of powerful motives to enforce every duty upon our practice.

In the first discourse on this subject, we have heard the nature and extent of that truth or sincerity which the gospel requires. In the second we have considered what obligations are discovered by the light of nature to be faithful, upright and constant in our words and our ways; and what additional motives the religion of Christ has furnished us with, to practise the same virtues; and may the good spirit of God make our souls feel the power of them! But nature is dark, as well as feeble. We are unskilful in the matters of holiness, and know not how to secure our virtue, and to guard ourselves from temptation to the contrary vice, unless we are informed by particular directions. I begun this work at the end of the last discourse. And as truth was divided into three parts, *viz.* veracity, faithfulness, and constancy; so I proposed to give special rules for the preservation of each of them.

The directions to preserve our veracity, were these:

1. Be well persuaded in your minds, that a known and wilful lie is utterly unlawful: Let your heart be established in this doctrine; for a slight conviction may be easily overcome by some advantageous circumstances, and the temptation will soon prevail. —2. Be sober, modest, and cautious in the manner of your speech, and do not allow yourself in those ways of expression which border upon lying; for if you often accustom your tongue to venture near a lie, you will be in danger sometimes of falling into it.—3. Take care to do nothing that you need to be ashamed of, that so you may not be under the temptation of a lie to cover or excuse it.—4. Watch against the violence of any passion; for this will sorely endanger the veracity of your lips. Passion will

carry your judgment beyond the truth of things, and then it will soon awaken your tongue to an extravagance of language, even beyond the present irregular judgment of the mind.

I persuaded you there to beware of blind and fiery zeal, and more especially in matters of small importance, lest you should be tempted to tell lies for a pretended defence of the truth. The pious frauds, as they are called, or the religious cheats that have been practised in christendom in all ages, have brought much dishonour to the gospel of Christ.

The second part of truth is faithfulness, to our vows, promises, and solemn resolutions. This is a conformity of our deeds to our words, as the former was a conformity of our words to our thoughts. And I come now to lay down some rules how we may secure our faithfulness, and maintain our conscience and conversation free from guilt or blame in this respect also.

I. Be very cautious in all the promises, vows and obligations, under which you lay yourself. Use a pious prudence in this matter, and it will be more easy to you to perform them. Do not multiply needless bonds upon your souls. The more care you take before you utter any thing with your lips, you will be more secure of fulfilling what your lips pronounce. In the case of vows, there is no inconvenience of solemn engagements to God to do what his law hath made your duty before. And this was the custom of the primitive christians, as Pliny, a heathen, acquaints us, that they made vows, and swore in their secret meetings, not to commit murder, or theft, or adultery, or indulge vicious courses. It is good to remind ourselves of what God requires, and establish all our obligations to the general practice of holiness.

But you had need be well advised before you make vows in matters that are indifferent; for many times this has exposed persons to greater snares and difficulties. They have hoped to restrain the violence of natural appetites by means of their own devising; and thus they have been tempted to be unfaithful to God himself. The word of God gives us this advice; Ec. v. 5, 6. *Better it is that thou shouldst not vow, than that thou shouldst vow and not pay. Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin, neither say thou before the angel, it was an error. Wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the works of thine own hands?* That is, "Do not hastily engage thyself in vows, such as the weakness of flesh and blood will not suffer thee to perform: Nor think of being absolved from thy own obligations in the presence of God, and his holy angels, by foolish excuses, and saying, It was a mistake; lest God, being angry and offended at thy broken vows, should bring a curse upon thee and thy affairs." There is most abundant experience of the folly and danger of needless vows in the church of Rome.

In the case of promises made to others, and public solemn resolutions, be not too frequent in making of them. See that the reason of things, the providence of God, and the circumstances of life, seem to call you to it before you engage; that so you may better maintain your faithfulness, and turn your words into deeds. Why should you make chains to bind yourself, without necessity or reason? Why should you promise to do this, or to go thither in a thoughtless or trifling way, and let your tongue put needless bonds and fetters on your hands and feet for time to come? *My son, if thou art surety for a stranger*, or if thou make a bargain without discretion, or multiply promises without prudence, *thou art snared with the words of thy mouth.*

There are some persons who are very free of their promises upon all occasions, and often indulge this manner of speaking, "I am resolved to do such a thing to-day, or I will certainly go to such a place to-morrow," &c. Whereas sometimes they find the thing impracticable, sometimes it is inconsistent with their other duties of life, sometimes it lays them under great difficulties and inconveniences to fulfil such appointments, and often they forget them too, and so disappoint their friends.

Before you tie yourselves by your solemn resolves and engagements, ask your hearts, Is it possible to be done, Is it lawful? Is it convenient? Is it proper? Is it consistent with other promises? Is the thing which I would promise due to my neighbour upon principles of honour, virtue, gratitude, religion? Is it necessary at all; and is it necessary at this time? Methinks I would have no promise made, but what should be kept; and therefore I would set all these guards around my lips. Experience of human affairs will teach us the use of these prudential rules, if we cannot learn them without it. A watchful caution in all such sort of language, as lays us under any engagements to future practices, is of necessary use to secure our faithfulness, and to maintain our truth with honour.

Besides, I might add also, that we should bring in something of God and piety into the common engagements of life; and this would preserve a greater guard upon our tongues, *Go to now, ye that say, to-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow;—for that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that;* James iv. 13, &c.

If therefore we would secure our faithfulness as well as our veracity, it is necessary to learn a modest and cautious way of speaking and accustom our tongues to practise it. When we are relating any thing past or present, the words, I think, I suppose,

it is my opinion, are very proper where the case has any thing doubtful in it: So when we engage ourselves to do any thing for time to come, I intend, I design, I hope, I will endeavour, are more cautious methods of speech, and very proper upon most occasions of life, except where the circumstances require a more express promise, whereby we bind all our faithfulnes to the performance.

II. I would add another rule in the case of vows and promises, which cannot but have some force toward the preservation of truth. Think solemnly with yourself, how miserable and abandoned a creature you must be, if neither God nor man should fulfil any of their promises or engagements to you, and thereby you should awaken your soul and all your powers to perform your obligations to them. What if your governors should break their engagements to defend and protect you? What if your parents and your friends should refuse to help and assist, to feed, or clothe, or comfort you? What if your debtors should refuse to pay what they owe you? and your servants deny you their obedience and help in a most necessary hour? What if your neighbours should disappoint you in all the agreements and promises they make? What if the great and blessed God should seize all your forfeited mercies, because of your unfaithfulness to him, and perform none of the promises of his word which regard this life, or the life to come? What a load of calamities would at once come upon you, and overwhelm you in soul and body! You would fall under universal distress and wretchedness in this world, and have no hope for eternity; and yet if you are careless to fulfil your covenants, or wilfully break your engagements, why should you expect that God should fulfil any on his side? Or why should his kind providence incline any creature to fulfil any on their side?

"O blessed and holy God, how false have we been to thee! How fickle! How unfaithful! How often have we broken the solemn engagements under which we have laid ourselves to thy majesty! Our comforts are all forfeited into thy hands, and yet we have food and clothing given us; the mercies of the night and the day are continued to us; thy compassions are renewed every morning, and in the evening thy faithfulness is glorified. We are ready to charge our fellow-creatures with unfaithfulness, and reproach their breach of promise, when we ourselves perhaps have been the unfaithful dealers, and have broken all those engagements and bonds of kindness or duty which are the foundation of their promises. We seldom or never think of our own unfaithfulness to them or to thee, but delight ourselves in accusations, while thou delightest in forgiveness. O how often hast thou pardoned our broken vows, and hast been slow to anger!

But we though we are wretchedly unfaithful ourselves, yet are slow and backward to forgive. We have been guilty of many failures in thy covenant, and our everlasting hopes had been utterly lost, if thy covenant had not stood firmer on thy side than it has on ours. Blessed be the name of Jesus, our glorious Surety, our Advocate at thy right-hand, to whom thy promises were first given! He has fulfilled all his sacred engagements: Thy faithfulness to him can never fail: in him are all our hopes established; by his grace we are kept from an utter renouncing of thy covenant, though we have so often wretchedly failed in the performance of it. Glory, honour, and praise be given to a faithful God, to a kind and faithful Mediator."

I come now to propose a rule or two for the preservation of our constancy, which is the third part of truth or integrity; and to give some directions how we may keep the whole course of our life consistent with itself, and agreeable to our profession.

I. Fix your great and general end, your chief and everlasting design, and keep it ever in your eye: then you will certainly be more regular and uniform in all your particular practices. Set your face towards heaven betimes. Let it be the most solemn and unalterable business of your lives to please God on earth, in order to enjoy him in heaven, and then you will not be easily tempted aside by the flatteries or the terrors of this world, to go astray and wander in the paths that lead to hell. Give yourselves up to Christ both in secret and in public. Devote yourselves to him, to his fear, and love, and service, in your private retirements, and solemnize your obligations to him among the churches of his saints. See that you are an inward christian, and declare to the world, that you are a follower of Christ. Mix with the sheep of his flock, and you will find many advantages thereby to secure your truth and constancy. When a temptation comes to make you act like the sinners of this world, tell the world, and tell your own heart, that you are a christian, and you must pursue heaven.

II. Get above the fear of the world, and the shame of professing strict godliness. It is sinful shame, or sinful fear, that has a thousand times tempted the professors of the name of Christ, to be false to their profession, to act unbecoming their character, and inconsistent with christianity. It is from a certain feebleness and cowardice of soul that they desire, at any cost, to keep well with all men, and are afraid, sorely afraid, to be out of the fashion, or unconformable to this world; therefore they venture upon some practice in company, that their hearts would abhor, if they were alone: Therefore they indulge many sinful compliances; sometimes they countenance the lewd and the profane, they join in

a jest upon things sacred, they make the ministers of Christ their objects of ridicule; and sometimes they fall into sensuality, luxury, and excess, because they must do as their company does, and have not courage enough to refuse.

If we would be true to Christ, we must live above the world, and be dead to all its threatenings and reproaches. If we are afraid of being thought truly religious, we shall not be able to maintain religion in the truth of it. There needs a sacred courage to be constant in the faith. We must learn to *endure hardship as good soldiers of Christ*, if we would be true to the *Captain of our salvation*. All that belong to his army are *chosen* and *faithful*; Rev. xvii. 14. It is a coward that changes his side as oft as the enemy makes a flourish, and he lists himself under every banner: But the constant christian is a soldier *faithful to the death, and he shall receive the crown of life*; Rev. ii. 10.

III. Never venture into the world without having solemnly committed yourself to the grace of Christ. Trust your soul afresh in the hands of Jesus every morning, that he may keep you true to himself all the day. All the divine motives you have learned, and all the solemn engagements under which you lay your own souls, will prove but a weak defence to virtue without faith and prayer. Commit yourselves to him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless. Your hearts, your lips, and your lives must be in his keeping, if you would have them true to God or man. Your adversary the devil is watchful and busy with all his wiles to tempt you to falsehood and inconstancy; none but he who has conquered the devil can be your sufficient guardian. And when and wheresoever we find frailty and folly in ourselves, O may the strength of Christ appear in our weakness, and be glorified in our preservation!

Thus I have finished all that I proposed concerning the first duty recommended in my text, Whatsoever things are true—think on these things.

There may be perhaps some other instances wherein this divine character of truth, uprightness, or integrity, ought to appear in the conduct of christians which do not so directly and immediately fall under the general heads which I have before named: But they may be easily reduced to one or another of them. There are various other methods of deceit and falsehood practised in the world, which break in upon this sacred character of truth, which I have not expressly mentioned before; such as subscribing with the hand to testify our assent to opinions, which we do not believe; counterfeiting the names or writings of other persons without their knowledge, consent, or approbation; adding or blotting out any thing from divine writings; or doing the same to the writings or men in civil affairs or contracts, whereby one party or another

may receive damage; practising fraud or deceit, or any criminal concealment in matters of traffic, or in matters of trust; and, in general, forgery and knavery of all kinds whatsoever: some of these may, by natural and easy consequences, be reduced to the heads I have spoken of, and are effectually precluded by the large descriptions of moral truth, which I have given: Others of them fall as naturally under the general head of justice and injustice, which will be the subject of one of the following discourses.

AN APPENDIX

To the three foregoing Sermons, wherein two important Questions about TRUTH *and* LYING, *are debated at large*

QUESTION I.

IF I have a good and valuable end in speaking, and my design is to serve the glory of God, or the good of my neighbour, may I not then use the art of lying, or speak a known falsehood, without sin? Did not Rahab the harlot practise this; Josh. ii. 4, 5. when she hid the spies of Israel, and told the messengers of the king of Jericho, that she knew not whence they came, nor whither they went? And yet she is commended by the apostle Paul; Heb. xi. 31. That *by faith the harlot Rahab perished not with unbelievers, when she received the spies in peace.*

Answer I. When any action, considered in itself, is utterly unlawful, it is not possible that the goodness of the end or design, can so change the law of God, or alter the nature of things, as to make that action lawful. The apostle Paul brings the same objection; Rom. iii. 7. *If the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory, why am I judged as a sinner?* But in the next verse, he speaks of it with indignation, as a heinous slander cast upon him, that he should maintain this pernicious doctrine, *Let us do evil that good may come:* And he adds concerning these slanderers, or concerning those who hold this doctrine of doing evil with a good design, that *their damnation is just;* ver. 8.

Answer II. The case of Rahab is easily adjusted in this manner, without allowing a lie to be lawful: Rahab, though she was a woman of evil fame in Jericho, yet had heard of the promise of God to Israel, to establish them in the land of Canaan; she believed this promise, and under the influence of this faith she entertained the spies, and thereby assisted the Israelites in the conquest of that city; so far her action is approved of God, and mentioned with honour: But she used a very sinful method in compassing this design, when she told a plain lie to the messengers of the king. The timorousness of her temper was a sore temptation to her; and though she fell into a criminal action, yet God so far excused the ill conduct, as to forgive the falsehood, and thereby put a more signal honour upon the eminence of her faith. Her name stands therefore recorded with honour in scripture among believers. But the lie, though it was pardoned, remains still a blemish to her character.

There may be also a reason given why the scripture does not particularly make any sharp remark upon this falsehood of Rahab: for the great degree of her ignorance does much lessen her fault, though not cancel it. A woman of her character, living in a heathen country, may well be supposed to have had little knowledge of the sinfulness of so beneficial a lie as that was, and no scruple about it.

But it is by no means a sufficient justification of her conduct, that the scripture does not directly censure her for lying; for there are many actions recorded in scripture, both of saints and sinners, which are utterly unlawful in the sight of God, which yet have not an express censure passed upon them. Rahab's being an harlot is not censured in any part of her history; nor Judah's defiling Tamar his daughter-in-law; nor Jacob and Rebecca's complication of lies to gain the blessing; nor the most express and wicked lie of the old prophet in Bethel, though it was the cause of the death of another prophet; 1 Kings xiii. yet surely these were crimes of heinous guilt. The plain commands or prohibitions of scripture are the rules to govern our practice: Nor can we fetch the lawfulness or unlawfulness of any matter of fact from the mere silence of the historical part of scripture about it.

Question II. If there are some persons who have not a right to truth, may we not lawfully speak falsehood to them? Now to prove that some have not a right to truth, it is urged, that truth or veracity is a virtue or duty of the social life: But there are many questions may be asked in the social life which the speaker has no right to be informed of, and therefore he has no right to truth when they are answered; may we not then answer them with falsehood? There are also some characters of persons who seem to have no part in the social life, as children who are not capable of judging for themselves, nor acting regularly in society; may we not speak a falsehood to them for their good? There are some who practise no social virtue, such as knaves and cheats, thieves, and pilferers; surely these have no right to truth, who are ever dealing in falsehood; and may we not cozen them who would cozen us? I will first offer two or three general answers to the question, and then descend to consider the particular instances.

Answer I. Truth seems to be a matter of eternal right and unchangeable equity. And there are general and express commands given us in scripture to speak the truth, and there are as express prohibitions of falsehood and lies. Now if there were any such exceptions as these against the general rule, I think God would have given us some plainer evidence of these exceptions in so important a point as truth is, upon which the welfare of

mankind so necessarily depends: But I cannot find any such evident exceptions given in the whole word of God.

Answer II. When we say a person has no right to truth, it may signify one of these two things:

1. That he has no right to demand of me a direct answer to his enquiry: And I will readily grant it in this sense, there are thousands who have no right to the truth; and therefore I may wave the question, I may give them an insufficient answer, or I may be silent, and boldly refuse to give them any answer at all. But 2, If his having no right to truth, be intended to signify, that the character of his person, or the nature of his question, is such as releases me from all obligation to truth in answering him, and that therefore I may lawfully tell him a falsehood; then I deny the propositions: For my obligation to speak truth doth not all depend on the nature of his question, nor doth it depend merely on the character of the enquirer, but on the eternal rule of equity, and the command of God. And I think this appears from hence, that though I were alone, it would not be warrantable in me to assert with my lips a known falsehood: and in this case the right or claim of man can have no place nor consideration.

Answer III. If this exception be made to the plain law of God, that we may speak a direct and express falsehood to any persons who in our esteem have no right to the truth in their enquiry; this seems to break all the bands of human society, violate all the faith of men, and render the divine commands of veracity, and the prohibitions of falsehood almost useless. The consciences of men would find a way of escape from the greatest part of the bonds of duty, and yet think they committed no sin.

For let us consider, who it is that must judge whether the person to whom we speak has a right to truth or no. Is it not the speaker himself who will be the judge? Now if the speaker must judge whether his neighbour has a right to truth, there is no case, wherein the speaker's interest may be any ways endangered by the truth, but his own sinful heart will readily whisper to him, that the hearer has no right to truth in such a question: and conscience will easily be warped aside, and comply to pronounce a known falsehood, under the colour and pretence of this exception: As for instance; if the buyer asks the seller, how much he gave for any merchandize? The seller by this rule may tell him double the price that it cost; for he will say, the buyer has no right to truth in such a question as this is. So if I ask an artificer, how he fashions his work, or what tools he uses in it? He may by this rule give me a very false answer, under pretence that I have no right to truth.

I readily grant in these cases, that the enquirer has no right to demand and claim an answer to such questions; therefore the seller or the artificer may refuse to inform him. But it is surprising to think that any man should persuade himself, that such a question being once asked, gives him a right to tell a lie! That any person should ever believe, that the mere enquiry of a thing improper to be told, absolves the answerer from all the obligations of truth, which his duty to God and man have laid upon him! Surely such a rule of conduct as this, had need have better arguments to establish it. But those who maintain this principle, must rather recur to the character of the person who makes the enquiry: and here indeed they give a little better colour to their cause.

I come therefore now to give particular answers to the instances alledged; 1. Concerning children. 2. Concerning knaves and cheats.

Instance I. Will you say, that children have no right to truth, because they are not capable of civil society?

But I reply, they are capable of knowing what truth and falsehood are, and of being influenced by the one or the other; they are capable of being deceived, and of knowing when they are deceived, they are capable of judging when they are treated with truth and sincerity, and acting according to the things you tell them: or else to what purpose do you speak falsehood to them instead of truth, and try to impose a lie upon them?

They are capable of resenting your conduct, when they find out the falsehood; and of refusing to believe you another time; For the very reason why they believe your falsehood at first, is, because they suppose you speak truth to them, and would not deceive them: And it is only upon this very principle that you yourselves can attempt to impose upon them.

Again, They are capable of learning from you and imitating ur conduct, and they will be so much more ready to practise ng, and to deceive you with it, when they have found you ctising lies, in order to deceive them. Suppose a mother has v and then persuaded a child to take a wholesome bitter medi-, by saying, it is not bitter, or has allured it to bed or to ol by some of the arts of falsehood, and this child should imi-the mother's example, and grow up to a confirmed liar; what rd and piercing reflections must the mother feel? Alas! I taught my child this sinful practice, I myself have led it into ays of the devil: How can I chide and correct by my re-that vice, which I have taught by my example!

It is sufficiently evident therefore, that though children are pable of half the duties of the social life, yet they are so far

capable of them, as to know what truth and falsehood are, and to resent, and to practise accordingly: And this is sufficient to the present argument, and fully answers the objection. I think therefore it is infinitely better to allure those, whose understandings are weak, and whose wills are obstinate, to the practice of duty, by all the gentle arts of softness and fondness, of persuasion and love, than by venturing to make an inroad upon our own sincerity, and to trifle with so sacred a thing as truth.

But the querist may say, Suppose these softer arts have been tried, and have no effect, and children may be in danger of destroying themselves, if they are not immediately prevented by some plain and express falsehood; is it then unlawful to preserve their lives by a lie? Answer. It is a command of God indeed to preserve life, but it must be done by lawful means. May a man rob on the high-way, to get money to feed and clothe him? Surely we ought to trust the kind care and providence of God with our own lives and others in the way of duty, and not do evil that good may come, as was said under the former question.

Thus much shall suffice for the case of children, on pretence of their being incapable of civil society. But the querist will insist still on the next instance:

Instance II. Cheats, and knaves, and thievish criminals, have no right to truth; for they have broken the bonds of civil society, though not by a public renunciation of them, and therefore we may use all manner of deceit toward them, and treat them with express falsehood and lying, wheresoever it may promote our own interest and safety.

To this I reply, that the rule of Christ is, *Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye also that unto them*; Mat. vii. 12. But this licentious doctrine cancels this divine rule, and substitutes another in the room of it, viz. *Whatsoever men do unto you, do ye also that unto them*; which is as widely different from the sacred rule of Christ, as light is from darkness, or heaven from hell. By this new rule we are no longer bound to practise that truth, that justice, that goodness to others, which we think reasonable they should practise towards us; but we have leave to practise that falsehood and knavery, that fraud, and injustice, and mischief to others, which they do actually practice towards us, or which we suspect they design to practise.

If one half of a city or a nation were fallen into knavish practices, through the great degeneracy of the age, or were become thievish pilferers, the other half would, by this rule, practise knavery with licence toward them, and deal out falsehoods to them by divine permission. And then the charge would

ickly be just and universal, *There is no truth in the land,* as os. iv. 1.

There is indeed scarce any censure of a degenerate and cor-pt age under the Old Testament, but fraud and deceit, lies and sehood, make a considerable part of the accusation or complaint; d surely God would never allow any principles or practices at have so pernicious a tendency. Hear how the prophets aiah and Jeremiah lament their multiplied transgressions in *nceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood: Truth fallen into the street, yea, truth faileth, and equity cannot enter;* lix. *This is a nation that obeyeth not the voice of the Lord. uth is perished, and is cut off from their mouth. They deceive ery one his neighbour, and will not speak the truth; they bend eir tongues like their bow for lies;* Jer. vii. and ix. Now if this entious principle were allowed, neither God nor his prophets uld ever want matter of complaint.

By this means also it will come to pass, that if a man happen ce to get the name and character of a thief or a cheat, all his ighbours will think themselves authorized to have no regard truth or honesty in all their dealings and discourse with him; this rule affirms that he has no right to truth. And when y person fancies that he has seen reason to suspect or dis-lieve his neighbour's honesty, he will think himself absolved m all obligations to speak truth to him. But what a wide and eadful flood-gate would be opened by this means, to let in inundation of fraud and falsehood, and to practise all manner deceit!

Let it be remarked also, that this doctrine is near a-kin to the pish abomination, "That no faith is to be kept with heretics; they are a sort of dangerous men, who would ruin the church, d therefore they have no right to truth." Now what shameful d horrid perjuries, and what execrable mischiefs, have sprung m this one impious principle of the church of Rome? The ord of God gives no manner of indulgence to such licentious inciples as these. We must wrong no man, defraud no man; e must not render to any man evil for evil, nor falsehood for lsehood, but overcome his evil with our good: and we must *vide things honest in the sight of men.*

It will be said, perhaps, that the scripture most frequently entions a neighbour, or a brother, or a fellow-christian, in the ohibitions of lying and falsehood, as in the ninth command-ent, *Bear no false witness against thy neighbour* 1 Thess. iv. *No man defraud his brother.* Eph. iv. 25. *Speak every man uth to his neighbour.* Lev. xix. 11. *Lie not one to another.*

But let it be replied, that the scripture demands righteous-ss for the strangers also; *Deut.* i. 16. and in several other

places. And when God, by his prophet Malachi, forbids *treacherous dealing with a brother*, he gives this reason for it, *Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us?* Therefore all mankind are brethren in this sense. Our duty to speak and practise truth, arises from our obligations to the law of God; and since God has not released us by any such exceptions, the lying and deceitful carriage of men does not authorise us to practise deceit and lying. It is indeed a piece of an old latin verse, that is in the mouth of many, "*Fallere fallentum non est fraus;*" which may be Englished thus, To cheat a knave is no cheating: But I know no verse in scripture that gives us this liberty. And I think we may by the same rule steal from them that would steal from us, or plunder those who would plunder us.

I will readily grant, that when a contract or bargain is made, whereby both parties are obliged mutually to perform something to or for each other, whether this contract be expressed in verbal promises, or implied in the nature of things, and by the known customs of mankind, then if one of the parties fail of performance, the other is thereby released from his promise or engagement: and the reason is most evident, because the promise or engagement was made in a conditional manner; and if the condition on one side be not fulfilled, the agreement or bargain on the other side is void, and utterly ceases; so that a man is innocent in this case, though he does not perform his promise. Now this is so well known to all men by the light of nature, and the easiest reasoning, that there is no need to enlarge upon it.

According to this general and known rule, suppose a merchant order any quantity of goods from his correspondent by the first ship, and promise payment by such a day; if the sending of those goods be neglected, and carelessly delayed, the merchant is not bound to keep his first appointed time for payment. An hundred instances there are of the like nature, which a small degree of reason, and an honest conscience, will easily determine, without intrenching upon truth. Such is the case of all conditional promises and contracts. But if a man be never so great a knave, and I should make him a lawful and an absolute promise of any thing, surely I ought to perform it, and not satisfy my conscience in the practice of deceit and falsehood, under a pretence that he had no right to truth.

There are other cases which may occur in human affairs, and create difficulty in the minds of sincere christians, a solution of which may be found in books written on those subjects: But I think most of them may be easily answered by the general principles before laid down: And, to finish this subject, I add, that

ıow of no circumstances that can make a plain, and express, known lie to become lawful: If life itself were in danger, the express prohibitions of falsehood and lying in the law of l, make it safer, in point of conscience, to venture the loss ıy earthly comfort, and life also, rather than venture upon lain and solemn lie.

And, in my opinion, that man, who, being assisted by divine ce, maintains the truth boldly, or refuses to speak a known ehood to a murderer, or a bloody tyrant, and bravely resigns life upon the spot, he dies a martyr to truth; his name ll be registered with honour among the saints of God on th, and his soul shall have its place among the martyrs in the ıer world.

HYMN FOR SERMON XXII.

Faithfulness.

'H God been faithful to his word,
sent to men the promis'd grace,
ll I not imitate the Lord,
practise what my lips profess?

h Christ fulfill'd his kind design,
dreadful work he undertook,
l died to make salvation mine,
l well perform'd whate'er he spoke?

Doth not his faithfulness afford
A noble theme to raise my song?
And shall I dare deny my Lord,
Or utter falsehood with my tongue?

My King, my Saviour, and my God!
Let grace my sinful soul renew,
Wash my offences with thy blood,
And make my heart sincere and true.

SERMON XXIII.

Christian Morality, viz. *Gravity, Decency, &c.*

PHILIP. iv. 8.—Whatsoever things are honest, *or grave*, &c. think on these things.

Οσα σεμνα, &c.

SINCE the translation of the bible into the English tongue is so excellent a performance in itself, and so necessary a service to the church: I feel a sensible regret, whensoever there is occasion to complain of it, or to correct it. In the main, I may venture to say boldly, it teaches us all the necessary doctrines and duties of christianity in a very ample and complete manner, and sets them in an evident light: And what the Spirit of God spoke in ancient times in Greek and Hebrew, is sufficiently manifested to us for our salvation in the English bible.

But in this part of the verse, which I am now to discourse of, the word which we render honest, is not so well translated as I could wish; for honesty is contained in the words true and just, which go before, and follow my text. But the Greek σεμνος, more properly signifies grave, decent, or venerable; and so you find it in the margin, which will oftentimes help you, when the word in the English text is not so expressive of the original sense. The same word σεμνος is rendered grave in several other places of scripture: It is three times so expressed in the third chapter of the first epistle to Timothy, ver. 8. *The deacons must be grave.* Ver. 11. *Their wives also must be grave.* Ver. 5. *A bishop must have his children in subjection with all gravity.*

It is a word that is used in Greek authors to represent the character of an aged man, a philosopher, or a magistrate among the heathens. It carries in it the idea of an honourable gravity, and a venerable decency of behaviour; and this is what the apostle recommends to the practice of christians. It is as if he had said, "The character of every common christian should have something in it so honourable, as may command a sort of veneration and respect from all persons they converse with, as much as the character of a wise old man, a magistrate, or a philosopher, does in the heathen world."

To improve this subject, I shall shew,

I. Wherein this gravity consists.—II. How the light of nature recommends it.—III. How the gospel enforces it.—IV. Lay down a direction or two, in order to obtain it.

First, This gravity and venerable decency which the apostle recommends in my text, may be supposed to consist in these three things.

1. A moderation and decency in our apparel.—2. A gravity and sobriety in our speech and conversation.—3. Honour, decency, and dignity in our whole deportment and behaviour.

I. A moderation and decency in our apparel, such as becomes the profession of persons whose chief ornament is religion and godliness. This the apostles, both St. Peter and St. Paul, each in their turn, insist upon, as a necessary qualification of women who profess christianity, and as an ornament to the doctrine of the gospel of Christ; 1 *Pet.* iii. 2, 3. Let your conversation be with fear; *whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and wearing of gold;* 1 Tim. ii. 9, 10. The apostle Paul bids Timothy the young evangelist teach the same doctrine and practice. *In like manner*, I will *also that women adorn themselves in modest apparel with shamefacedness and sobriety; as becometh women professing godliness.*—Not that all christians must utterly abandon those richer and costly methods of ornament, gold or pearls, which the apostle there makes mention of; for every one of us should wear such raiment as suits our character and our age, our company and business in the world: But let not these be our chief ornaments, still remembering that we are christians? and let our apparel, as well as our conversation, shew that we despise trifles and thus maintain the dignity of our high and holy calling.

Here, saith a * learned commentator, "it is worthy to be noted by the women that this precept ought not to be slighted by them, as of little moment, seeing it is so carefully inculcated by the two chief apostles of the Jew and Gentile, St. Peter and St. Paul; and the contrary is represented as a practice opposite to godliness."

Nor while you are dressing, should you forget that you are sinners, and therefore should put on shamefacedness; for all our ornaments and clothing are but a memorial of our first sin and shame. And when we take a pride in our garments, it looks as if we had forgotten the original of them, the loss of our innocency. Nor is this sort of advice to be confined to the female world: For, as the same author expresses it, "If it be so unbecoming a christian woman to be thus concerned in adorning and

* Dr. Whitby.

tricking up her body, it must be much more unbecoming a christian man, and that which makes him truly to deserve the name of a fop." It is a token of a light and vain mind to be too fond of gaudy habits, a mind not much affected with sin or with salvation. Surely christians are born for greater things, and their aim should point at higher excellencies than these are, Let their chief ornaments be the graces of the Spirit, and the virtues of the heart and life. A well adorned body, and a neglected mind, very ill becomes a professor of the gospel.

Christians should look like strangers and pilgrims here, and not think themselves undressed, unless they are conformed to all the niceties and fashions of the world. Sometimes, it may be, we are too much afraid we shall not look like the children of this world; whereas the apostle advises us rather to look like strangers. We are travelling homeward through a foreign country, having the ornaments of holiness on us, which is the raiment of heaven. I confess we are not required to affect singularity, nor to seek a foolish and useless distinction from the customs of our country, where they are proper, innocent, and becoming; for the kingdom of God does not consist in any affected peculiarities of dress or behaviour; but let us remember too, that it is below the glory of our character, and the dignity of our calling, to have our thoughts uneasy, if every pin and point that belongs to our apparel be not placed in the most fashionable manner; to fret and rage, if every fold of our garment be not adjusted in perfect conformity to the mode.

Then we may be said to fall short of that venerable decency in our apparel which christianity should teach us, when we are among the first in any new devised and gaudy fashions; when we are some of the foremost in the gaieties of the age: When we run to the extremes of every new mode, and affect to vie with the vainest of our sex: When the business of dressing is made one of the most frequent, important, and solemn enquiries and concerns of life; and when it employs some of our most serious thoughts, and our warmest passions: When we indulge a greater expence in finery than our circumstances will allow, or our stations require: When we waste more time in adorning ourselves, than the duties we owe to God or man, will reasonably permit; and especially if we intrench upon the hours which should be devoted to sacred purposes. I should add also, that then we certainly break in upon christian sobriety, when we indulge such sort of clothing as in its own nature becomes a temptation to immodesty, and brings fuel to the impure fire of the eyes, or of the heart.

I would not be thought to treat too largely upon this subject or handle it too severely; but let us remember, that our biggest

danger in this age is excess, and luxury, and vanity of mind: We are pretty secure now-a-days from too great a carelessness in this respect.

II. Gravity and sobriety in our speech is another part of that honourable conduct and character which we ought to maintain, and to which the holy apostle invites us. In the second chapter of Titus, *ver.* 6, 7, 8. you have this direction of the apostle to Titus the evangelist, how he ought to behave himself, and what he speaks to him chiefly as a minister, may be given as a rule to all christians whom he must instruct in all things, *shewing thyself a pattern of good works*; *in doctrine*, or in discourse, *shewing incorruptness, gravity, and sincerity*; *sound speech that cannot be condemned, that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil to say of you.* He gives the christians at Ephesus the same advice; Eph. iv. 29. *Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.* Talk of something that may improve one another in knowledge, in virtue, in religion: And let each of us be ashamed to think that we have been an hour or two in each other's company, and have neither spoke nor heard any thing that is worth remembrance. How often, after a visit among friends, must we take up this just and shameful complaint, "Alas, I have said nothing for their improvement, nor heard any thing for my own!"

In *Eph.* v. 4, the apostle there secludes some sort of conversation from the lips of christians, *Neitheir filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient*, which are ἐκ ἀνήκοντα, not agreeable to our profession. Foolish talking and jesting are here forbidden, as well as filthiness. By foolish talking, we may suppose such sort of language to be intended, from which it is impossible any profit or advantage should arise to a wise or a good man. And by jesting the apostle here designs such sharp and biting jests that wound the reputation of a person concerning whom they are spoken. Such a turn of wit, as the original word signifies, that at the same time wounds a good name, and gives a bitter reproach. Not that every thing pleasantly spoken is supposed to be unlawful; or that the apostle any where forbids all manner of mirth and jesting in conversation; for there are proper times and seasons for such sort of discourse: And there may be valuable ends in it too, when it is innocently used, on purpose to recreate nature, and refresh the mind. And how far this may be indulged, I shall have occasion to speak toward the end of this sermon.

III. Another thing that is included in this word gravity, is honour and decency in our whole deportment and behaviour.

Each of us should be careful to maintain our public character as a christian, with a due sense of the dignity of it. Christians should be ashamed to debase the powers of their nature, to practise any thing that is sordid and unworthy; nor make the members of their flesh, nor the faculties of their mind, slaves to that which is ridiculous or foolish.

How unbecoming is it to see a christian spoil his countenance, and disfigure a human face, by practising all the wild and wanton grimaces of folly and madness! To see man, who is made after the image of the Son of God, distort his body in the most antic postures, and give up all the honours of his nature to base and senseless merriment! Surely the duties of christianity lead us to nothing below the dignity of man. Here I would not be mistaken, nor do do I pretend that the gospel requires such a constant solemnity of countenance and language, as though we were all preachers, or always preaching. There is no need to put on serious airs at all times: We are not bound to banish mirth when we become christians. Laughter is a natural action, and the faculty was not given to mankind in vain, nor is the exercise of it forbidden for ever.

The chief ends of it seem to be these two; either to recreate animal nature by expressions of mirth, or to put folly out of countenance.

There may be times to recreate nature, to unbend the spirits from business, and to indulge mirth among our friends. The wise man assures us, there is a time to laugh, as well as to mourn. There are times proper for weeping, and some persons may have times for dancing too; *Ec.* iii. 4. And in the 19th verse of the xth chapter the same divine writer says, *a feast is made for laughter.* At the mutual entertainment of friends we may be merry, and not sin. Our holy religion only demands this of us, that we confine our mirth within the limits of virtue, and take heed lest when we give a loose to the sprightly powers of animal nature we should transgress the rules of piety, or trespass upon things sacred.

Another purpose for which laughter was made, is to reprove and punish folly, and put vice out of countenance. There are seasons wherein a wise man or a christian may treat some criminal or silly characters with ridicule and mockery. Elijah the prophet condescended thus to correct the priests and worshippers of Baal; but this sort of conversation must by no means be the business of our lives, and the daily work and labour of our thoughts and our tongues. It is *the heart of a fool that is in the house of mirth,* for he would dwell there continually; *Ec.* vii. 4. If we are always affecting to throw out some turns of wit upon every occurrence of life, and tack on a jest to every thing that is spoken

if we interline all our discourse and conversation with merriment, banter and joking, it is very unworthy of that gravity and honour that belongs to the christian life.

The second head of discourse which I proposed, is to prove, that the light of nature, or the law of reason, requires something of this gravity of speech and behaviour; and this is manifest, if we consider the nature of man in opposition to the brute that perishes, or the growth and age of man in distinction from children and babes.

1. If we consider man in opposition to the brutal world: Man, who has a rational soul, should act conformable to that sublime principle within him, and not devote himself to a life of fantastic humour, or content himself with the character of an everlasting trifler. What a poor and contemptible account is it of any person to say, he is a walking jest, a mere living trifle? His thoughts are made up of vanity and emptiness, his voice is laughter, and is whole life is composed of impertinences.

There is a sort of persons in the world who never think well of themselves but when they are dressed in gay attire, and hope to command the respect of mankind by spreading abroad their own fine feathers. Their raiment is the brightest and best thing that belongs to them, and therefore they affect to shew it. There is another sort of men who value themselves upon their merry humour, and that they can make their company laugh when they please. But the more refined and rational part of the world value all these creatures as they do peacocks, or other animals that imitate the voice and actions of man. They use them as an entertainment for their eyes or ears, to give a fit of diversion, or to pass away a merry hour. We generally look upon this kind of people as very worthless things, as something beneath ourselves and as sinking below their own species. We seldom converse with them upon the level, or to attain any of the nobler purposes of life. We only borrow their wit, or their folly, their humour, or their finery, for a season of amusement, and justly despise them when the laughing hour is at an end. Reason itself tells us, that human nature was made for something greater and better, for contemplation and action much superior to what these trifling creatures are acquainted with. Again,

2. If we consider man as he stands in distinction from childhood, surely a more grave and solemn carriage becomes him.—Children are pleased with painted toys; gaudy garments and sounding trifles are their chief delight. They are entertained with little impertinences, agreeable to their ignorance and the weakness of their age: But it is a shame to a person of well-grown years to practise the child for ever. He that devotes him-

self to a life of useless idleness, and treads round the circle of perpetual mirth and amusement, without profit to himself or the world, is but a child in longer garments, or an infant of larger size.

The third general head leads us to consider, what forcible arguments christianity furnishes us with to practise this sobriety, gravity and decency of behaviour: And I shall throw them all into a few expostulations,

1. Do we not bear the name of Christ, a sacred and venerable name? And shall we cast disgrace upon it by any thing that is mean and dishonourable? Do we not profess to be the followers of a crucified Jesus, to be disciples of the cross? But wherein do we follow him, if we spend our days in mirth and trifling? His conduct was all holy and heavenly, and we can never look like his disciples, if our conversation savour of earth and vanity. What a noble simplicity runs through all his speeches, through all the actions and the behaviour of our blessed Lord! And how little do we imitate him, if we fondly pursue the gay follies of life in our dress, in our speech, and in every thing we do! No glarings of affected wit, nor insipid pertness, can add any thing to our character as christians.

2. Let us remember that we are the sons and daughters of the Most High God. We profess to separate ourselves from the triflings and impertinences of this world, as well as from the impiety and guilt of it. "Come out from among them, saith the Lord, and I will be your Father, and ye shall be my sons and my daughters, saith God almighty." Surely the children of a prince should behave with solemnity and honour, when they are in the midst of the lower orders of mankind; and the children of the King of heaven should remember the dignity of their birth, and their high relation, when they are conversant among the sons of earth. Their carriage indeed should not be proud and haughty to the men of this world; Jesus, the only begotten Son, was meek and lowly: And there is a sacred art of maintaining a divine humility, among the meanest of our fellow-creatures, without indulging the practice of any thing mean and ridiculous. Our blessed Lord was a companion of fishermen, but not of mimics and public jesters.

3. Let us think again, that we are bought with a high and valuable price; *we are redeemed, not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot;* 1 Pet. i. 17, 18. And what is it that we are redeemed from? It is from this evil world, and from a vain conversation. The Son of God hath *loved us, and washed us in his own blood,* and shall we

file these souls of ours with the meanesses of this life which hrist hath cleansed in so rich a laver? He hath *made us kings d priests unto God and his Father.* Let us now and then ask rselves and enquire, is our language and behaviour becoming ch illustrious names, such titles, such honours, as are put upon by the Father and the Son?

4. Again, let us review our profession; What is our calling hat is our design? What is our hope? Are we not born from ove? Are we not pilgrims and strangers here? Do not we ofess to seek a better country, that is, a heavenly? Do we t live for heaven and immortality? How unbecoming is it en for christians to be perpetually light, and vain, and frothy? ow unbecoming our holy and heavenly calling, and our erlasting hopes? If we are children of the light and of the y, let us not live as though we belonged to the night and darkss: Let us not sleep, nor trifle as others do, but watch d be sober. And especially if our natural temper be sanguine d sprightly, and incline to assume vain airs, there is more need constant watchfulness over the heart and life, and a bridle upon e tongue, lest we should speak indecencies, and be guilty of ly and madness.

[Here this sermon may be divided.]

The last thing I designed, was to propose some directions in der to cure the levity of the mind, and to maintain such a decent avity in the course of our life as becomes the gospel.

Direction I. Let us meditate often on the most sublime and e most awful parts of christianity; and through the assistance the Spirit of God, these will be effectual guards against this nity of temper.

The sublime truths of christianity demand our frequent rew. Let us often rise high in our thoughts, and let our faith ok far backwards to the eternal ages before this world was. et us contemplate the love of God the Father, in contriving r salvation, before he stretched abroad these heavens, or laid e foundations of this earth. Let us think of the condescension his mercy, when he chose fallen perishing sinners to be the obcts of his everlasting love. Let us dwell upon his compassion man, when he appointed his own Son to take flesh upon him, d to become our Mediator and sacrifice. Let us survey with ly wonder the various glories of the Son of God, by whom and r whom all things were made, who upholds all things by the ord of his power, and who is the express image of his Father. et us behold him consenting to hide all these honours behind a il of flesh and blood, walking the streets of Jerusalem, and avelling on foot through the villages of Israel, attended

with a few poor despicable men, or surrounded with the reproaches of the blaspheming Jews. Let us look upon this illustrious person, who was adored by angels, yet unknown and unglorified among the sons of men, and humbled even to death and the grave; then gaze on him rising again from the dead, and declared to be the Son of God with power, exalted at the right-hand of the Majesty on high, and ruling all the millions of inhabitants of the visible and invisible worlds. Surely if our souls were inured to the meditation of such sublime wonders as these, we should not easily immerse ourselves in trifles and fooleries.

Again, let us meditate on the more awful doctrines, the more solemn and dreadful truths of our religion, and these will be an effectual restraint to a vain temper of mind. Let us think on the justice of God manifested in the destruction of sinners in all ages, when it appeared in a prodigious flood of water, and with a deluge of rain testified against the wickedness of the old world; and when it came down in flaming fire upon Sodom, and upon the cities of the plain. Let us meditate on the wrath of God, that has been revealed in numerous instances against all the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. Let us contemplate that divine and severe justice, that appeared in the sufferings and death of God's own Son, when it pleased the Father to bruise him, and to make his soul an offering for sin. Let us think of his agonies in the garden, and on the cross, when he bore the weight of our iniquities, and stood in the place of sinners. Let us send our thoughts down to the regions of death and hell, and behold the fallen angels bound in chains of darkness, and groaning under present torments, yet waiting for the day of greater vengeance. Let us think with ourselves what millions of our fellow-sinners, the sons and daughters of Adam, lie there banished from the presence of the Lord, and tormented with fire in their consciences without remedy, and without hope, and say, why are not we there too?

Let us often look forward to the awful moment of our death, and the time of our departure from all the flattering scenes of this present world. This will put a damp upon the vainest mind, and hang with a painful weight upon the sons of mirth and levity. This will be a means to restrain us from that foolish and trifling behaviour, which otherwise our tempers might incline us to. And let us remember the solemn hour when we must stand before the tribunal of our Lord Jesus Christ, divested of all these gaudy shews of life, in which we are now ready to pride ourselves, and there we must receive a sentence without repeal, which shall send us to heaven or to hell at once, and fix our everlasting state. These are terrors or glories too solemn to be trifled with; these

are thoughts that will hold our souls awake and serious, this will preserve that gravity of mind which becomes a christian, and keep us in a prepared temper to fulfil present duty, and to wait the final event of all things.

II. If we would maintain that venerable decency in our frame of spirit, and in our deportment, which becomes the gospel, let us set ourselves about some useful employment for the service of God, or our fellow-creatures, or for our own best improvement. If Satan find the mind empty of thought, and the hands void of all business, he will be ready to fill them with temptations to iniquity and mischief: And the triflers of this world will be ready to seize upon such a person as a fit partner for their impertinences, and allure him into follies beneath the dignity of human nature, and the character of a christian.

I have often pitied some of the descendents of honourable and wealthy families of both sexes, the unhappiness of whose education has given them nothing to do, nor taught them to employ their hands or their minds: Therefore they spend their hours in sauntering, not knowing whither to go, and are at a loss what to do with themselves to wear their life away. Upon this account they give themselves up sometimes to the mean and scandalous pleasures of the lowest of the people, and spend their hours in chattering and vulgar merriment. They make the business of their dress the study and labour of half the day, and spend another part of it in trifling discourse and laughter, and in scattering jests and scandal upon their neighbours or acquaintance. All these pieces of folly and immorality would be rectified, if they would but find out for themselves some daily and proper business to be employed in. King Solomon at his leisure hours studied natural and moral philosophy, he discoursed of the nature of vegetables, from the cedar to the hyssop, and of beasts, birds, and fishes besides his proverbs and rules of prudence for the government of human life; 1 Kings iv. 32, 33. St. Paul, when he was not employed in his sacred work, yet he would not be idle; and having no need to study for his sermons which he had by inspiration, therefore he wrought with his hands at tent-making, and maintained himself by it: "*Not*, says he, *because we have not power to eat your bread while we teach you the gospel: but to make ourselves an example to you.*" See Acts xviii. 3. and 2 Thess. iii. 8, 9. And good Dorcas, when she had no business of her own, *made coats and garments for the poor*; Acts ix. 36, 39. Such honourable examples as these deserve our imitation.

III. Let us keep a strict watch over ourselves when we indulge mirth, and set a double guard upon the seasons of recreation and divertisement.

The rules of religion do not so restrain us from the common entertainments of life, as to render us melancholy creatures, and unfit for company. There is no need to become mere mopes or hermits, or order to be christians. The gospel does not deprive us of such joys as belong to our natures, but it refines and heightens our delights. It draws our souls farther away from mean and brutal pleasures, and raises them to manly satisfactions, to entertainments worthy of a rational nature, worthy of a creature that is made in the image of God. The innocent entertainments of life are not utterly forbidden to christians, but are regulated by the gospel.

When we have considered and found them to be lawful, then they are to be regulated these two ways.—1. All our recreations and divertisements must have some valuable end proposed. 2. We must distinguish the proper time and season of them, and confine our diversions to that season.

1. They must always have some valuable end proposed. The chief and most useful design of them is to make us more chearful and fitter for some hours or days of service afterwards. Recreation must not be our trade or business, but merely used as a means to prepare us for the valuable businesses of life.

The scripture indeed tells us, that "*of every idle word that men shall speak, there shall be an account given in the day of judgment;* Mat. xii. 36. And much more of idle hours and actions. But this doth not utterly exclude all manner of recreations, or all words of pleasantry, which may be innocently and properly used upon some occasions; but whatsoever words, whatsoever conversation, whatsoever sort of pleasurable entertainments, we indulge ourselves in, which have no valuable end, no useful design in them: These will bear but an ill aspect before the judgment-seat of Christ. We shall not be able to give a tolerable account of such idle words or hours at that day; and it is the judge himself who tells us so, and adds his *Amen* to it.

It is proper more especially for persons that are of a melancholy temper, or that have perhaps been overwhelmed with bodily diseases, or overloaded with some sorrows, or cares, or businesses of life, to give themselves a little loose or diversion now and then in delightful conversation, or other recreations and exercises. These may be as useful as a glass of wine to refresh nature, to make the heart glad, and the spirits lightsome; for they tend to fit this animal body of ours for better service to the soul in future duties that God calls us to: And so long as we confine our recreations to this design, and keep this end in view, our words of pleasantry in private conversation, and even our recreations, and diversions that are more public, may be agreeable

the mind and will of God; for it is his will, that our whole ature, flesh and spirit, should be kept in the fittest frame for ity. And some natures are so constituted, that they will hardly kept in a temper fit for duty, without some divertisements and creations. Where this therefore is the end, these practices nnot be called idle, that is, impertinent, and to no purpose. ut where no reasonable design is proposed, sports and merrients are hardly to be defended, for all rational creatures ought act with a view to some valuable end.

2. Another regulation which ought to be given to all our versions, is this; we should narrowly watch, lest the time of ir recreations intrude upon the hours and seasons of business or religion. There is a time to laugh, the wise man tells us, as ell as a time to labour or to pray; but laughter must be coned to its proper place and proper time, and not intreneh upon e season where affairs of bigger importance, and matters of ave and serious consequence should be transacted.

Conscience has something to do in matters of recreation as ell as in our religious or civil affairs: And as it can never be wful to rob God or our families of any of the time that should devoted to their service, on purpose to lay it out in diversion, neither is it by any means proper to let the seasons of version come too near the seasons of worship. When a loose given to all the natural powers in mirth and pleasure, they are t so easily recollected all at once for the sacred service of relion. Nor should we run hastily away from the duties of worship, d plunge ourselves into the midst even of innocent merriment; r this would look as though we were weary of devotion, and nged to be at play. A wise christian will divide his times aright, d make all the parts of his conduct to succeed one another in a cent order.

Besides, the hours of recreation should not be multiplied by ose persons who have least need of them; such are persons of hearful and healthy constitution: And they will be used more aringly by christians of maturer age, and longer standing in ligion. As a child grows up toward man, he leaves off the imrtinences of infancy, and the sports and trifles of childhood; d as a man grows up more and more toward a perfect christian, s methods of pleasure will be changed from light and gay, to at which is grave and solid.

To conclude this subject, I would mention only one powerful otive to preserve christian gravity, and that is, that hereby the mper of your spirit will be better prepared for every religious ity, whether it be prayer or praise, and better fitted to meet ery providence, whether it be prosperous or afflictive: Whereas ose who perpetually indulge a merry temper of mind, when

a prosperous providence attends them, they are tempted to excessive vanity and carnal joy; their hearts are not filled with thankfulness to that God from whom their mercies come, being too thoughtless and regardless of the original donor. On the other hand, when affliction smites them, they are in danger of despising the stroke of the rod, nor does the correction of their heavenly Father make so deep and useful an impression upon their spirit as it ought to do.

When in the course of our lives we maintain such a grave and composed frame as becomes a christian, we find our hearts more ready for all the duties of worship. We are prepared to receive evil tidings as well as good, and to attend on the will of God in all his outgoings of providence. We are ready to receive messages of sorrow, or the summons of death, for we are still conversing with God: We keep the invisible world in the eye of our faith: And our spirits are ready prepared to depart from the flesh, and to meet our God and our Saviour in the unknown regions of light and immortality.

HYMN FOR SERMON XXIII.

Christian Morality, viz. *Gravity, Decency, &c.*

ARE we not sons and heirs of God?
Are we not bought with Jesus' blood?
Do we not hope for heavenly joys,
And shall we stoop to trifling toys?

Can laughter feed th' immortal mind?
Were spirits of celestial kind
Made for a jest, for sport and play,
To wear our time, and waste the day?

Doth vain discourse or empty mirth
Well suit the honours of our birth?
Shall we be fond of gay attire,
Which children love, and fools admire?

What if we wear the richest vest,
Peacocks and flies are better drest:
This flesh, with all its gaudy forms,
Must drop to dust and feed the worms.

Lord, raise our hearts and passions higher,
Touch our vain souls with sacred fire;
Then with an elevated eye
We'll pass these glittering trifles by.

We'll look on all the toys below
With such disdain as angels do,
And wait the call that bids us rise
To promis'd mansions in the skies.

SERMON XXIV.

Christian Morality, viz. *Justice*, &c.

'HILIP. iv. 8.—Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, *or grave*, whatsoever things are just——think on these things.

Ὅσα ἐστὶν δίκαια—

IN many parts of the sacred writings, there appears a very close onnexion of the subjects which are handled; a natural order is bserved, and a beautiful transition made from one to the other: ut this is not to be expected in every text, nor is it at all necesary that it should be so. When St. Paul enumerates several irtues or vices, he sometimes heaps them together, and doth not esign any regularity or natural order in placing them. Our ommentators therefore in such cases, when they are once resolved find these beauties and connections where the holy writer did t intend them, they oftentimes torture and strain both their own vention, and the words of scripture. Thus, I fear, I should do, I would attempt to give a reason why the apostle in this coltion of virtues, named gravity or decency before justice, which f so much greater importance in the christian life.

I take them therefore in the order in which they lie; and ng treated of truth and gravity, I proceed now to consider third piece of morality which he mentions, that is, justice, *tsoever things are just*,—think on these things; let these be bjects of your meditation and of your practice.

And here if I should entertain you in two discourses with ngle subject of justice, I hope I shall not exceed the limits ir patience: For it is what the apostle frequently insists is a glory to christianity, that those that profess it be just iteous. You who have fixed your hope on the grace of nd have a design to honour the gospel, to you I would end this great duty of the law, and that in this method:

I shall endeavour to shew what is the general nature of ice, and lay down the universal rule of it.—II. Discover is special instances what those things are, which are just, in our justice or righteousness must appear.—III. I shall e proof of this great duty of justice or righteousness by of nature, and according to the law of reason.—IV. t forcible influence the gospel of Christ has to recom-

mend justice to your meditation and practice.—V. Propose a few directions how to guard yourselves against temptations to injustice, or rather point out some of the chief springs of injustice, that you may avoid them.

And while I proceed in this work, you will rejoice inwardly if you find your own consciences sincerely answering to the characters of this virtue in any good measure: And if there be any shall find himself a guilty sinner, and very deficient in this practice, let him be reproved, ashamed, and amend.

First then, Let us consider the nature of this justice, and what is the most universal rule of it.

In general, justice consists in giving to every one their due. According to the stations in which God has placed us, and according to the several relations in which providence has joined us to our fellow-creatures, every person we converse with hath something due to him; and this we are bound to pay as men, and much more as christians. But since cases and circumstances are infinite, and it is impossible for any book to contain, or any man to receive and remember so many special rules for justice, as there may be occurring circumstances in the world, which require the practice of it; our Lord Jesus Christ has therefore given us one short rule whereby to judge what is due to every man, and fitted it to every purpose: Mat. vii. 12. *All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them; For this is the law and the prophets.*

I confess there may happen in human affairs some cases of such exceeding intricacy and difficulty, that very few persons have skill enough to determine precisely what is due, or what would be strictly just and righteous: Nor will this rule infallibly lead us into the perfect knowledge of it; but even in such cases, a sincere honest man consulting his own conscience, and asking, what he thought reasonable that his neighbour, in the like case, should do to him, would seldom wander far from strict justice; and by practising agreeably to this general law, would approve his conduct both in the sight of God and men.

Thus our blessed Saviour hath set up a court of equity in the breast of every man. This rule is easy to be understood, and ready to be applied upon every occasion. The meanest of them may learn and practise it, and the highest are bound to obey it. This is that divine and comprehensive rule of justice or righteousness, by which you must regulate all your actions, and give every one their due: "Do to others, as you would have them do to you:" Not as an unreasonable self-love would wish to receive from others, but as your own conscience would think it reasonable others should do to you, as I have explained it at large in a sermon on that text.*

* See Sermon XXXIII.

The second thing proposed, was to discover in various in-
nces what those things are which are just, or wherein our
hteousness must appear.

Here it is necessary to distinguish justice into that which
longs to magistrates, and that which belongs to private persons.

That which belongs to magistrates is called distributive jus-
e, because it divides and distributes such rewards and punish-
ents as are due to every one, according to the merit or demerit
the person; and this is done either by the law and light of
ture, or by the laws of the land in which we dwell. Now in
s sort of justice the general rule of our Saviour, of which we
ve been speaking, is of excellent and constant use. Let a
ince or a magistrate place himself in the room of a subject or
erior, and ask what is equitable and just that his governor
ould practise toward him, and let that be the measure of his
n conduct toward his subjects or inferiors: Let him exercise
authority according to this sacred rule of righteousness.

But in our separate assemblies we have very little need to
eak of the duty of magistrates, or of distributive justice, since
ere are very few of that rank and order of men among our
arers. We have reason to give hearty thanks to our present
vernors, who distribute so much justice to us, as to give us
liberty of worshipping God in a manner that differs from
eirs.

I apply myself therefore immediately to consider that justice
ich belongs chiefly to private persons, and which is their duty
practise. This is called commutative justice. This is that
uity of dealing, that mutual exchange of benefits, and render-
g to every one their due, which is necessary between man and
an, in order to the common welfare of each other. This is that
stice that is due from every person toward his neighbour, whe-
er he be superior, inferior, or equal: And I think the following
stances which I shall mention, will comprehend most of the
ses wherein the practice of justice is required:

I. It is just that we honour, reverence and respect those who
e our superiors in any kind; whether parents, masters, magis-
ates, ministers, or teachers, or whatsoever other character of
periority there be in the natural, the civil, or the religious life;
herwise we do not pay them their due.

Honour and obedience are due to parents. It is the first
mmand of the second table. *Honour thy father and thy mo-
er, that thy days may be long in the land. Children obey your
rents, for this is right in the Lord.* Manifest your affectionate
ity toward them. Pay all due submission to their commands,
d all honourable regard to their advice.

Honour the king as supreme, and other ministers of justice

as subordinate to him, and submit to them in all the just executions of their authority: This is due from subjects to princes. *Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, in singleness of heart as unto Christ, with good-will, doing service as to the Lord, and not to men.* Your faithful, diligent, and cheerful service is their due. *Let those that labour in the word and doctrine be counted worthy of double honour,* that is, of respect and maintenance: It is due to them in the church where they are set as elders, if they rule well. I mention these hints but very briefly, and for the most part in the language of scripture, as instances wherein these characters of superiority demand honour and duty from inferiors.

I grant there may be other obligations to respect and honour our superiors in some of these cases, besides the mere law of justice: but this law of commutative justice that I am now treating of, obliges us to it. The light of nature and scripture both suppose and oblige parents to take care of their children, to advise and instruct, nourish and provide for them; therefore obedience and honour becomes their due. The command of submission given to subjects, supposes and obliges princes and rulers to protect and defend them from all injury. The precept of chearful and willing obedience given to servants, supposes and obliges *masters to do the same things unto them*; that is, to treat them with good-will, and chearfully give them their food and clothing, or their wages and hire; Eph. vi. 9. Nature and scripture suppose ministers and teachers to be capable and willing to give good advice, counsel, and instruction to those who are younger, or who accept of their preaching; therefore let respect and honour be paid where it is due.

It is the foundation and rule of commutative justice in all these instances, that whilst inferiors are obliged to pay due regards to those that are above them, the superiors are equally obliged to confer those benefits on persons of a lower character, which the law of God, and the light of nature require; but some of the cases I have mentioned, will fall in naturally under the following particulars.

II. Another instance of commutative justice, is the particular kindness that is due to near relations. This is a very beautiful and a pleasant part of life, where it is well managed, this affectionate and delightful exchange of good turns one for another.

Now that it is due to near relatives, according to the appointment of God, will be made evident in this manner:

God, the great Creator of all things, could have produced all men immediately by his own power, and have made them arise up in several successions of time, without such a propagation or dependance one upon another, if he had pleased; and then there

would have been none of these tender and engaging relations of father, son, and brother. But the wise Creator hath ordained otherwise; he hath appointed such methods for the building of families, and continuing mankind in the world, as bind every soul of us by the ties of nature to one another; Acts xvii. 26. *Of one blood hath God made all the nations of the earth.* And those that are nearer a-kin to one another, especially in the same family, as brethren and sisters, ought to look upon themselves under more peculiar and mutual obligations to do kindnesses for each other in the first place, according to their capacity. The obligation lies on each party, because it lies upon the other. My brother is bound to love and help me, therefore it is my duty to help and love my brother: For *a brother is born for adversity;* Prov. xvii. 17. It is the sovereign will of Heaven, that there should be such near relations, who should be bound by the law of creation and duty to protect, to support, and assist one another in a time of adversity: This is the design of God the Creator, in the course of his providence, in his subdivision and propagation of all the families of the earth.

And as it is a piece of justice to confer this mutual help which is due to near relations, so there is something of justice too in our distinguishing acts of kindness and assistance according to difference of necessity, and according to difference of merit. I cannot believe I am bound to love or serve every brother, or every sister, with equal degree of affection and kindness, whatsoever their character be, whether virtuous or vicious: Nor to bestow equal benefits upon them, where there is not equal necessity: this can never be of a divine appointment. And though there is some duty, some kindness, some assistance always due to those that are our near relatives, yet this very rule of justice obliges us to give more respect or love to those that are in themselves more honourable and worthy, and those who merit more at our hands, may reasonably expect it. This will farther appear from the next particular.

III. Another instance of justice is, love to those that love us, and gratitude to those that have done us good. Those that have been serviceable to us in the concerns of our souls, or our bodies, demand kindness from us, and returns of service, according to their benefits, and our capacity.

Let us first take notice of the gratitude that is due for spiritual benefits. The christian Galatians, who were converted from idolatry and heathenism, and reconciled to God by the preaching of St. Paul, had such a powerful and penetrating sense of their obligations to him, that if it were possible, saith the apostle, *I bear you record, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and*

given them to me; Gal. iv. 15. And when the same apostle writes to Philemon, who was converted to the faith by his ministry, he gently insinuates the obligations he was under; though I do not think proper to tell thee, saith he, *how thou owest unto me even thine own self*; ver. 19. St. Paul speaks upon this principle in many places of his epistle; 1 Cor. ix. 11. *If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we should reap your carnal things?* And when he gives an account of the contribution which the christians of Macedonia and Achaia made for the poor saints at Jerusalem, he expresses himself thus: *It hath pleased them verily to make this contribution, and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things*; because it was from the Jews that the gospel first came forth, and was preached among the Gentiles; *Rom.* xv. 27.

There is some sort of gratitude due also to those who by their writings, or more especially by their conversation or instructions, have improved our understandings, and added to our knowledge in things natural or moral, as well as divine. There are some persons in the world, who have advanced their intellectuals in a very sensible manner, by the company of their friends, but they have so much of pride and self reigning in them, that they refuse to acknowledge it: They would fain have the world believe that it is the rich soil of their own understanding has produced this harvest of itself: They are ambitious and fond to have it thought that their notions are all their own. Though they plumed themselves with borrowed feathers, they are unwilling to confess whence they received them, and pretend they are owing to nature only. But pride is a secret vice, and a cursed spring of injustice in more instances than one, as I shall shew hereafter.

After the benefits bestowed on our souls, we ought to consider what is due to those that have served our bodies, or our natural life. Those that have healed our diseases, that have saved us from imminent dangers and calamities, or present death; those that have fed or clothed us, or supported life when we were poor and destitute: All these deserve particular kinds of remembrance, and due returns of service. Those that have either vindicated our honour, or increased our reputation, and spread our good name in the world, stand entitled also to some agreeable returns of benefit.

Do not let us imagine then, that gratitude is a mere heroic virtue, that we may pay or not pay at our pleasure; for nature dictates it to us, as a piece of strict commutative justice, and equity of dealing between man and man. We may be very properly said to treat our neighbour unjustly, if we refuse to serve

him again, who hath first served us, when his distressed circumstances shall require our assistance.

There are some cases indeed wherein the person who is obliged by his neighbour's kindness, cannot possibly make a return equal to the benefit received, without ruining himself and his family, or exposing himself much more than his neighbour did to serve him. There are cases wherein the person who hath obliged us, may over-rate his kindness, and undervalue all our acknowledgments: He may require most unreasonable returns, and think he is never sufficiently recompensed. There are cases also wherein the benefactor may repent of his past services, may endeavour to take away the benefit bestowed, may without reason commence a resolute enmity, and do what in him lies to cancel all former obligations: In such circumstances as these, the obligation of gratitude may be diminished, and perhaps may cease altogether. And though sometimes, in these very cases, there may be high and heavy charges of ingratitude brought by the first benefactor against a person of a very grateful mind; yet these accusations may be utterly unjust in the sight of God, who knoweth and weigheth all circumstances in a righteous balance. But where no such bars are laid in the way, it is evident that the practice of gratitude, and a mutual return of benefits, is but a piece of natural justice. The very *publicans and sinners do good to those, that do good to them:* Mat. v. 46. Luke viii. 32.

IV. Another piece of justice is, the payment of the full due to those whom we bargain or deal with, whether the contract be made formally in words, or implied in the nature of things, according to the customs of mankind. And under this head, not only those who buy and sell, who lend and borrow; but all ranks and degrees of mankind, who have any commerce with each other, are included, from the prince upon the throne, to the day-labourer in the high-ways and hedges.

The very notion of commutative justice implies the giving one good thing in barter of exchange for another. And all commerce amongst men was originally carried on this way, *viz.* the husbandman gave corn, the grazier cattle; the draper gave cloth; the artificers and labourers their skill and work; the prince and rich man gave food and protection; the poor and the subject gave their attendance and service: And thus mankind lived by an exchange of benefits. But when they found many inconveniences arise from this manner of dealing, they contrived another way of exchanges, and that is by money, which by universal agreement is made the common measure of all things in contract: And since that time, skill and labour, attendance and services are exchanged for money, as well as goods and merchandizes.

Now herein consists the practice of justice, that every one render to his neighbour that which is due upon the account of any of these benefits or conveniencies of life he receives from him.

Let us give the first place to kings and rulers in this discourse, as justice requires. Though the distribution of special rewards and punishments may have something in it of a distinct nature, yet the common protection which they owe all their subjects, and the obedience and tribute which their subjects owe them upon that account, are properly a part of commutative justice. By their oath of magistracy, and by our engagements of allegiance expressed or implied, we bargain with them for protection, and we ought to pay them tribute. They accept of a high and heavy charge, and agree to execute the laws of the land for the good of the people: Therefore not only the purses, but the consciences of the people are under obligations to pay taxes to the magistrate for the support of his governing power, and the maintenance of his honour and authority, that he may the better fulfil the glorious and useful work. This is what the apostle insists upon, and argues in that known place, the xiii. chapter to the Romans; *Rulers are ordained of God, not for a terror to good works, but to the evil.* The ruler is the *minister of God to thee for good, and he beareth not the sword in vain; he is an avenger to execute wrath upon him that doth evil.* Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, that is, for fear of his anger: but for conscience sake, as a matter of justice and duty: And for this cause also pay tribute. And it is to be noted, the apostle puts our duty in this respect upon the foot of justice; ver. 7. *Render therefore to all their dues;* that is, whatsoever things are just, perform to them; render *tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour.*

As the payment of tribute and taxes to those who undertake our protection, defence, and safety, is a necessary duty; so the payment of a salary to a teacher, of wages to a servant, of money or merchandize to a trader, of hire to the workman, are other parts of justice. Let not the labourer that hath reaped down your fields, or wrought in your service, go without his hire, which was a practice the apostle reproached in his days; *James* v. 4. The law of Moses is very strict in this matter; Deut. xxiv. 14, 15. *Thou shalt not oppress a hired servant that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren, or a stranger.* To express it in modern language; whether he be a christian or not, a good man or an evil man, let him have his hire. If he is so poor that he cannot tell how to provide for himself to answer the necessities of the evening, then see that thou pay him the hire of the day, nor let the sun go down upon it, for he is poor, and sets his heart, or depends upon it. Trespass not upon his poverty by thy with-

holding his due so long as may turn to his prejudice; let not his hire, which is detained by fraud, cry against thee, for the Lord of hosts, the God of Justice will hear the cry of the oppressed.

And not only in the case of a poor labourer, but in every other instance make conscience of paying that which you have borrowed, or what you owe to your neighbour, and that not only in full measure, but at the appointed time of payment: The time is part of the contract as well as the money. Do not say, "I intend to be honest, but I will not pay this week, or this month." Do not withhold what is due, and say to thy neighbour, *Go, and come again, when thou hast it by thee; Withhold not good from him to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it.* This is forbid by the inspired preacher Solomon; *Prov.* iii. 27, 28. Nor is this agreeable to the golden rule of our Saviour, *Do to others as ye would that others should do unto you.*

V. Help to our fellow-creatures in cases of great necessity, seems to be another piece of human justice, even though they have never done any thing actually for us. We are bound to defend our neighbour from apparent injury, so far as is consistent with our own safety, and sometimes farther too. It is our duty to direct him in the right way, when he is wandering or uncertain. It is a piece of justice to warn him of approaching danger, and to give him some assistance in case of sudden calamity or distress attending him. When we see his soul, or his body, or his estate in imminent hazard, we ought to give him notice of it; we should put forth some efforts of kindness for his security, and pluck him as a brand out of the fire. Our own conscience dictates this to us, since we should think it a very reasonable thing to expect the same kindness from our neighbour, when we are found in the like circumstances.

Can we suppose that the law of God should appoint us to lift the ox or the ass of our neighbour out of a pit, or to restore his sheep to him when going astray; *Deut.* xxii. 1. and yet that we are not bound to fulfil the same duty of love toward our neighbour himself? Nay, the command of Moses reaches still farther; *Ex.* xxiii. 4. *If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again.* How much more should this be practised toward the soul or the body of a fellow-christian?

If the law of justice require us to secure the cattle or possessions of our neighbour; surely then we are obliged to deal as kindly with his reputation and good name, which in some cases is the best part of a man's estate, and is almost as dear to many as their

health or life. When we happen therefore into such company as give their tongues a loose to scandal, and we hear our neighbour vilified and reproached, we ought to ward off the calumny, and to refute the scandal, where we know that our neighbour does not deserve it.

This piece of justice or duty, to assist a suffering neighbour, arises from the social nature of man, who by the law of nature is so far born for a social life, as to come into the world with this claim, and under this sort of obligations; for a naked exposed infant may claim the patronage and protection of every eye that beholds him. And where other circumstances are equal, those who are most capable of affording help, seem to be most obliged. Now if it be a work of human justice to preserve such a helpless piece of human nature from death, surely every infant grown up to any degrees of capacity and manhood, ought in like manner to esteem himself obliged to afford some assistance to his fellow-creatures, according to their distress, and his capacity well considered and adjusted.

Therefore, my assistance or relief of an injured or perishing creature, is a sort of duty to mankind, though the person himself be an utter stranger to me: The history of the good Samaritan in the gospel tells me, that in such a case every man is my neighbour, though he be of a different nation, sect, or party. But when men are fellow-subjects, or fellow-citizens, or combined in any natural, civil, or religious society, this rule of justice appears with more force and evidence; it strikes a brighter light upon the conscience, and ought to have more power upon the heart and practice; for combination into society is an implicit contract or promise of mutual help under necessity.

I confess, several of the instances which I have mentioned under this fifth head may be referred also to charity and mercy, of which I shall speak hereafter: but for as much as the light of nature and the law of God require these beneficial actions of men toward each other, I have here placed them under the head of justice.

VI. The last piece of justice which I shall mention, is reparation to those whom we have wilfully injured, as far as possible: And this is a certain duty, whether we have done them injury in their souls, in their bodies, in their estates, or in their reputation.

If we have led them into errors or heresy by our conversation; if we tempted them to sin by our allurement or example; if we have solicited their assistance in any base or guilty practices of our own; we ought seriously to employ our best powers and prayers toward their recovery from the snare of the devil: If we have wilfully injured their health; if we have blasted their credit;

we have thrown a blot upon their good name; if we have de-
ıuded them of any part of their due, or wasted their substance,
us know and consider that the law of justice requires us to
ıke what restitution we are capable of: But still it must be done
such a manner as must consist with our duty to the rest of our
low-creatures round about us. It is a vain thing to pretend to
sorry and repent that we have done our neighbour a wilful in-
y or to flatter him with idle compliments of asking his pardon,
ile it lays in our power to repair the damage he sustains in a
y of consistence with our duties, and yet we obstinately refuse
Such a repentance as this cannot be sincere in the sight of
d, nor have we any reason to hope that his justice or mercy
ll condescend to accept it.

We have heard these various instances of justice, this large
l particular account what is due to our neighbour, in the mani-
d relations and businesses of life. I grant there are several
ficulties that may attend some of these instances in the particu-
practise of them, by reason of the infinite variety of circum-
nces which may surround our actions, and the unforeseen
ırrences of human life. The strictest rules of equity or jus-
e, in some cases, require a mitigation; and it is impossible to
r before-hand what shall be precisely and exactly due to our
ighbour in every new accident or occurrence. But a sincere
e of justice wrought deep into the heart, and a sacred regard
the golden rule of equity which Christ hath given us, will lead
through most of these perplexities into the paths of righteous-
ss and truth.

It is time now to have the question put close to conscience;
Has this been the manner of our life? Has this been our con-
ct toward our fellow-creatures? Are we children, and have we
id all due honour and obedience to our parents? Has the father
cause to complain that we have disobeyed his authority? Has
e mother no reason to say, that we have scorned her advice,
abused her tenderness and compassion? Are we servants,
ıve we never wasted the goods of our master, nor spent that
me in idle company, in folly, or in sin, which should have been
nployed in his service? Have we dealt with our relatives in the
ıme family as becomes a brother, a sister, or a near kinsman,
nd fulfilled the duties to which we were born? Do we never
eglect to make due acknowledgments for favours received? Have
e loved those that love us, and practised the law of justice and
ratitude to those who have rescued our souls and bodies from
listress and danger, or laid obligations upon us by peculiar
enefits.

Am I a trader, and do I practise strict justice and truth, in all
hat I buy, and in all that I sell? Have I been carefully solici-

tous to wrong no man, to defraud no man, to cheat and cozen no man? Do I hate the arts of falsehood and knavery? Have I paid the full due to all that I deal with, and do I keep the proper time of payment, which contract or custom have appointed? Have I defended my neighbour from injury, and assisted him in the day of his distress, as I myself should reasonably hope for his defence and assistance? Have I sought to rescue his good name from reproach and slander when it has been attacked? Or have I rather fallen in with slanderers, and joined in with the wilful scandal? Have I honestly sought to make restitution to another where I have been guilty of wilful injury, and done what in me lays to repair the damage that my injustice has brought upon him? Have I attempted to repair his losses, so far as is consistent with the duties of my other relations in life?"

Where is the person that can lay his hand upon his heart, and say, I am guiltless before God in all this? Who can wash his hands in innocency, and pronounce himself righteous? Surely such a discourse as this is, should awaken conscience to sensible acts of repentance and mourning; we should be willing and ready to yield to the conviction, where the word of God fastens the charge upon us, and lay ourselves low before the throne of a righteous God. *Blessed Lord God, if thou art strict to mark iniquities, who can stand before thee? But there is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be feared.* We have failed in many instances of duty toward our fellow-creatures, as well as toward thee our Creator: We have neither given to God nor to our neighbour the full due of love which thy righteous law requires: We lie down in the dust before thee, and betake ourselves to the refuge that is set before us: Jesus the righteous is our hope, he not only paid to God and man all their due, in the course of his holy life, but he also restored that honour to thy justice by his death, which we had taken away by our unrighteousness. O may every soul of us be forgiven for his sake, and created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works? *Amen.*

HYMN FOR SERMON XXIV.

Christian Morality, viz. Justice and Equity.

COME let us search our ways, and try,
Have they been just and right?
Is the great rule of equity
Our practise and delight?

What we would have our neighbour do,
Have we still done the same?
And ne'er delay'd to pay his due,
Nor injur'd his good name?

Do we relieve the poor distress'd,
Nor give our tongues a loose
To make their names our scorn and jest,
Nor treat them with abuse?

Have we not found our envy grow,
To hear another's praise?
Nor robb'd him of his honour due,
By sly malicious ways?

In all we sell and all we buy,
Is justice our design?
Do we remember God is nigh,
And fear the wrath divine?

In vain we talk of Jesu's blood,
And boast his name in vain,
If we can slight the laws of God,
And prove unjust to men.

SERMON XXV.

Christian Morality, viz. *Justice*, &c.

PHILIP. iv. 8.—Whatsoever things are just, &c.——think on these things.

IF a bare proposal of the rule of duty, and the mention of the various instances of it, were sufficient to persuade mankind to the practice; then I need not prolong my discourse on this subject of honesty and justice: For I have already proposed the sacred rule which our Saviour has given us, Do to others as ye would that others should do to you; and I have described the several instances wherein this rule must direct our conduct, that we may be just and righteous in all our dealings amongst men.

But alas! our natures are so corrupt, our consciences are so unwilling to receive the laws of duty, and our perverse wills and passions have so much reluctance to the practice, that we have need of arguments to enforce it upon conscience, we have need of powerful motives to awaken our souls to righteousness, and it is necessary therefore that I proceed to the third head of discourse which I proposed, and that is to shew how far the light of nature dictates to us the duty of common justice, and what arguments may be drawn from thence to influence men to be honest.

I. If we consider the natural right that every man hath to keep that which belongs to him, it will appear that this is the gift of God as the God of nature. God, the common author of all our beings, requires that this right be held sacred and inviolable.

I shall not run back to ancient ages, to trace the original grounds of property, or how men became entitled to any of their possessions: It is sufficient for me, that every man is born into this world with a right to his life, to his limbs, to his liberty and safety, and to the good things of this world which he possesses according to the laws of nature, and of the nation where he is born. He has a right also that these should be secure from the hands of injustice and violence, unless he himself be some way concerned in the practice of injury to his fellow-creatures.

That man therefore who offers injustice or violence to his neighbour in his body, or his soul, or estate, he robs him of his natural right which God hath given him, and which the law of nature secures to him: He sins against the God of nature, the common Father of mankind; and his conscience hath reason to expect that the God of nature, who is just and righteous, will avenge the mischief done to his injured creatures.

Let it be always observed and excepted here, that the great God himself, considered merely as the God of nature, and where he has not bound himself by promise, reserves a right to resume what he has given, and especially when his creatures have made a forfeiture of their blessings by sinning against their Maker: But this does not authorize men to deprive one another of their possessions, unless he has appointed them from heaven the executioners of his vengeance by a most evident and infallible commission particularly given by God himself; as in the case of the Israelites spoiling the Egyptians of their borrowed jewels, and depriving the Canaanites of their lands, and their lives: But I know not any instance of that kind ever since.

II. If we consider the need that every man stands in of the help of his fellow-creatures, justice and honesty will appear to be a natural duty of the social life: And God, as he is the Governor of the world, will take vengeance of any neglect or violation of this duty, either in this world, or in the other.

Commutative justice, as it is described in the former discourse, is built upon this foundation, that one man has need of another's assistance: Nor is there any the meanest figure amongst mankind so very worthless, useless, and contemptible, but he may be capable of doing us some service either now or hereafter. It is possible we may be in such circumstances, as to stand in need of the help of the meanest, as well as of the mighty; and therefore the duty of social life obliges us to practice the rules of justice toward all. The rich stand in need of the poor to perform the meaner offices for their convenience, as much as the poor stand in need of the rich to supply them with food or money. The master has need of the servant to assist and obey him, as well as the servant stands in need of maintenance or wages from the hands of his master. One man can never procure for himself all the necessaries, and all the conveniences of life? it is indeed impossible. The same man cannot sow his own corn reap his own harvest, keep his own sheep, make his own bread, form all his own garments, build his own house, fashion his own furniture, and secure his own possessions; no man can provide for himself in all respects, without the assistance of his fellow-creatures. Now those from whom he expects to re-

ceive help in any of these instances, it is necessary he should give them help in other instances wherein they stand in need of his. This is one foundation of justice between man and man; that so every man may have the necessaries and conveniences of life by his neighbour's assistance. Thus *the king himself*, as Solomon says, *is served by the field*: Eccl. v. 9. The prince stands in need of the plowman: The plowman gives food to the prince, and the prince gives to the plowman protection and safety.

I might run through the various instances wherein justice is to be practised, and shew how the higher and lower orders and characters of men have mutual need of each other: The buyer and the seller, the artificer and the merchant, the teacher and the scholar; and thus I might make it appear, that unless a due exchange of benefits be maintained, and the practice of justice secured, none of us could enjoy the safety, the ease, or the conveniences of life.

Where there is no practice of justice amongst men, no man can live safe by his neighbour: Every one that is mighty and malicious, that is proud or covetous, that is envious or knavish, would rob another of his due, and either assume the possessions of his neighbour to himself, or make havoc of them, and destroy them. There would be everlasting confusion amongst men, slander and theft, cheating and knavery; plunder and slaughter, and bloody violence would reign among all the tribes of mankind; if justice were banished from the earth; for neither life, nor liberty,

may be a strong restraint upon the violent inclinations of men, and bring just vengeance upon them, when they bring injury upon their neighbours. Therefore it is for the welfare of the innocent and the righteous, that the laws have ordained vengeance for the guilty; that those who would not injure their fellow-creatures, may be guarded in the enjoyment of their own property and their peace, and may have them secured from the sons of injustice.

And besides all the punishment that such sinners justly receive from men on earth, God, the great Governor of the world, has often revealed his wrath from heaven against all the unrighteousness of men, as well as their ungodliness. He has hereby proclaimed his public approbation of justice, and his hatred of all iniquity. His terrors have sometimes appeared in signal and severe instances against those who have been notoriously unrighteous, and who have broken all the rules of equity in the treatment of their fellow-creatures. This the heathens themselves have taken notice of. And they thought this to be so necessary for the government of the world, that their priests have invented a sort of goddess called Nemesis, whose office is to avenge the practice of fraud or violence, and to bring down curses on the head of this kind of criminals.

As the ancient records of the heathen world give us some histories of divine vengeance, so the bible abounds with more awful and illustrious instances of this kind; which leads me to,

The fourth head of my discourse; and that is, to consider what forcible arguments and motives the christian religion affords for the practice of justice among men.

If I were to speak of distributive justice, or that which belongs to the practice of the magistrate, never was it more gloriously manifest, than in and by God the Father, when he refused to pass by our iniquities without punishment, and laid the dreadful weight of it upon the head and soul of his own Son. Never could magistracy receive such a glory, as when our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, hung and died upon the cross, suffering the penalty that the law of God, the supreme magistrate, had denounced against sinners.

And as punishing justice was glorified in all its terrors, so rewarding justice also appeared most illustrious. Because our Lord Jesus Christ had fulfilled obedience not only to the broken law which we lay under, but to those peculiar laws which God the Father also gave him as a Mediator; therefore it pleased God highly to advance him, according to his own eternal covenant. God rewarded him, as a magistrate, distributing justice to a person who had done the greatest things for the honour of his sovereign: He exalted him at his own right-hand, and gave him

a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow; for he deserved it at the hands of his Father, and his Father distributed rewards equal to his desert.

Rewarding justice again appears glorious, in that God the Father communicates unto us the rewards of the sufferings of his own Son. God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, because *the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son*, has paid for all our follies and unrighteousness; 1 John i. 9. Faithful and just to his Son, that he may not go without the rewards of his sufferings: Faithful and just to us, because it was in our name and stead that the Son suffered. But not to insist upon this longer, commutative justice is abundantly enforced also by many considerations drawn from the books of the Old Testament, as well as from the gospel of Christ.

If we consult the moral statutes of God, which were given to the Jews, we shall find them full of righteousness. These statutes are of everlasting force, and their divine solemnity should impress our consciences. *That which is altogether just shalt thou follow, that thou mayest live and inherit the land: And the judges and officers shall judge the people with righteous judgment, and shall shew no respect to persons, nor take a gift to pervert justice;* Deut. xvi. 18, 19, 20. *Ye shall not steal, nor deal falsely, nor lie to one another. Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, nor rob him. The wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee all night until the morning. Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in weight, or in measure, just balances and just weights shall ye have; I am the Lord your God;* Lev. xix. 12, &c. *A false balance is an abomination to the Lord; but a just weight is his delight;* Prov. xi. 1. *To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice;* Prov. iii. 15. *Woe to him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong, who uses his neighbour's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work;* Jer. xxii. 13. *Remove not the ancient land-marks, nor enter into the field of the fatherless: for their Redeemer is mighty, and he shall plead their cause with thee;* Prov. xxiii. 10, 11.

If we review the records of the Jewish history, we shall find the cruel and the covetous, the tyrant and the oppressor, made terrible examples of the vengeance of God against unrighteousness. Survey the plagues of Egypt, and the dreadful desolations of that fruitful country, with the destruction of the first-born by the midnight pestilence, and the armies of Pharaoh drowned in the Red sea, and you may read there the wrath of God against the unrighteousness of men, written in dreadful characters. They treated the race of Israel with cruelty and sore oppression; they destroyed their male-children, and provoked God to bring swift destruction upon themselves. Behold Adonibezek, king

of the Canaanites, with his thumbs and his great toes cut off by Joshua, and confessing the justice of the great God. *Threescore and ten kings*, saith he, *with their great toes and their thumbs cut off, have gathered their meat under my table: As I have done, so God hath requited me*; Judges i. 7. *See the dogs licking up the blood of Ahab in the place where he slew Naboth the Jezreelite*, in order to take unjust possession of his vineyard; 1 Kings xxi. 19. These things which were written of old time, remain upon record for our instruction in the days of christianity.

But let us take more special notice what influences may be derived from the gospel, and from the name of Christ, to enforce the practice of justice among men.

I. If we look to our Lord Jesus Christ as a law-giver, how various and how plain are his solemn and repeated commands, not only in his sermon upon the mount, but upon other occasions too, that justice be practised between man and man. He hath explained to us that glorious rule of equity, on purpose to make the practice of justice easy, plain, and universal, *love your neighbour as yourself*; that is, do to others, as ye would that others do to you.

We cannot but think that the holy soul of our Lord Jesus was concerned to secure the practice of justice and righteousness among his followers, when we read his terrible rebuke to the pharisees for the neglect of it, and a curse pronounced upon them; Mat. xxiii. 23. "Woe unto you scribes and pharisees, hypocrites: for ye pay tythe of mint, and anise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith. Judgment in that place may signify commutative and distributive justice: all manner of exercise of righteousness towards their fellow-creatures. Under a pretence of serving God better than your neighbours, and crowding his temple with your presence, and his altar with sacrifices and gifts, ye abandon common justice, ye neglect the righteousness due to your fellow-creatures. There is a woe denounced upon you, and my Father will inflict the curse, for *he hates robbery for burnt-offering*; Is. lxi. 8. Nor will the God of heaven excuse you from paying your dues to men on earth, under pretence of paying honour or sacrifices to him.

There are many other threatenings in the New Testament written against those that neglect justice, and pronounced by the apostles in the name and authority of Christ, their exalted Lord. The covetous and extortioners, those that take away the light of their fellow-creatures, are shut out from the heavenly blessedness; 1 Cor. vi. 10. "Know ye not, says the apostle, that none of these shall inherit the kingdom of God?" As much as to say, it is so very obvious a thing, that an unjust man can never enter

into heaven, whatsoever pretence he makes, that I may appeal to the meanest capacity, ye all know it. God will repay vengeance to them that do wrong to their neighbours, whether they be great or mean, for *there is no respect of persons with him*; Col. iii. 25.

II. Consider Christ as a pattern of justice and righteousness. Look to the example of our Lord Jesus; you see him, who was the sovereign Magistrate and Lord of all, who could distribute crowns and kingdoms to men, submitting himself to commutative justice among creatures.

Behold the Son of God, who was the brightness of his Father's glory, and the delight of his soul before the creation; behold him stooping down to our world, and taking flesh and blood upon him to become our brother, that he might shew us how we ought to love our brethren. It was an unparalleled instance of divine love that Christ has given us, when he came down from heaven to become our neighbour, and to dwell amongst us, that he might teach us to love our neighbours as ourselves.

Behold the glorious Son of God subjecting himself to his earthly parents, to Joseph the carpenter, and to Mary his mother, that he might instruct us how to pay obedience to our superior relations. See how the King of kings pays tribute to Cæsar, when he was so poor, that he was forced to send Peter a fishing, to procure the tribute-money by a miracle. And though the beasts of the field were his, and he could have commanded the cattle upon a thousand hills, to make provision for his followers; yet he would not dispossess the owners of them, but created food on purpose to feed four or five thousand in the wilderness.

III. If we consider Christ as a glorious benefactor, who has taken care to provide for us the necessaries of this life, and hath purchased for us, at the hands of God, the eternal treasures of heaven and glory. Has not this blessed consideration force enough to guard us against all temptations to injustice? Shall a christian break the rules of equity, and steal, or cheat, or plunder his neighbour to gain money or merchandise, who has the promises of God for his support in a way of diligence and humble faith? Shall we sully our consciences, and defile our souls with knavery and injustice for a little of the pelf of this world, when we have the unsearchable riches of Christ made over to us in the gospel, and the inheritance of heaven in reversion?

IV. Let us consider the very nature and design of the gospel of Christ, it is to make sinners holy, to make the unjust righteous: The new man of christianity must be created in righ-

teousness and true holiness. Therefore are we *purchased with the blood of Christ, that we might be a peculiar people, zealous of good works;* Tit. ii. 14.

It is a shame and scandal to the christian name, when one who wears it is unrighteous or dishonest. An unjust christian, what a contradiction is it in itself, and how it disgraces the profession of the gospel! Hear how the great apostle treats his Corinthian disciples when such sort of sins were found amongst them; 1 Cor. vi. 1—8. *Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust man and the infidel. Dare any of you injure your neighbour, your fellow-christian? I speak this to your shame. Brother goes to law with brother, and ye injure one another. Why do not you rather suffer wrong? nay, you do wrong, and defraud, and that your own brethren.* But what is the consequence? Such wretches as these are, *shall never inherit the kingdom of God.*

The grace of God that bringeth salvation; Tit. ii. 9, 10. *teacheth us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly and righteously,* and religiously, *in this present evil world.* It teacheth us righteousness towards men, as well as sobriety among ourselves, and godliness towards the King of heaven. But how hath this divine religion been scandalized for want of justice in the professors of it! Scandalized among heathen kingdoms, among Turks and unbelievers! and christianity in our own land, how hath it been dishonoured by the practices of those that pretend to that holy name! How hath the conversion of wild heathens in the Indian nations been hindered by the injustice and fraud of christian merchants and traders there, or by merchants who call themselves christians. I have heard it said by persons whom I could fully credit, that a Turk when he is suspected of fraud and cheating, will reply, "What, do you think I am a christian?" O how hath the gospel of the lovely Jesus been rendered odious by the abominable practices of those that pretend to honour him! What falsehood, what lying, what perjury, and cheating, and deceit, and violence have been practised by our traders in foreign lands! Thus there has been an ill savour of our holy christianity carried beyond the seas, by those, perhaps, who have pretended to convert the infidels. And many in our own nation, who have begun to set their faces towards heaven, have been sorely disgusted at the knavish practices of professors, and been tempted to think that all religion is a jest, and to abandon the ordinances of the gospel. But when souls stumble, and fall, and perish by such discouragements, woe to him that gave the offence, and laid this stumbling-block of iniquity in their way. How heavy must the blood of souls lay upon such sinners!

Surely there has been enough said on this head to discourage oppression, deceit, and injustice in the professors of christianity, if argument, and shame, and terror can have power and prevalence over sin and temptation. O may almighty grace attend this discourse of justice, and work the sacred love of it in the hearts of men!

Now if ye are made willing to walk by the rules of equity and justice, instead of proposing particular directions for this end, I shall proceed,

In the fifth and last place, to point out the various springs of injustice, that ye may avoid them.

The great and general spring of injustice to our neighbour is a criminal and excessive love to ourselves. For since the comprehensive notion of justice lies in this, to give to every one that which is due, it follows, that the general notion of injustice consists in taking to ourselves more than is due, or in giving less than is due to our neighbour.

There are a thousand instances of this unrighteousness among men, in reference to their bodies, their souls, their good name, or their possessions in the world. This general term of injustice is so extensive, that it includes a great part of the sins forbidden in the second table. Disobedience to parents and governors, rebellion, treason, murder, adultery, theft, violence and plunder, cheating, and deceit, and slander, with all sinful

pierced themselves through with many sorrows. For *they that will be rich, fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which draw men in destruction and perdition;* 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10. Solomon is of the same mind; Prov. xxviii. 20, 22. He that maketh haste to be rich, shall not be innosent, for he hath an evil eye upon the possessions of his neighbour.

It is from this cursed root of covetousness that a multitude of bitter fruits proceed. It is by this vicious principle working within us, that we are tempted to take what is not our due, either by craft or by violence. Hence it is that men cheat each other in their daily commerce, they defraud and over-reach their neighbour, if they can, in every bargain they make, and try all the arts of subtle knavery, in order to enrich themselves. They divest their souls of truth and virtue, and put off conscience and shame to load themselves with thick clay.

It is covetousness that teaches the sons of men to practise upon their dealers with a false balance and a deceitful beam. They shorten their measures, and lessen their weights by which they sell their goods: But when the case alters, and they buy any thing for themselves, they will, if possible, take another sort of weight, or use a different measure; all which are an abomination to the Lord.

It is the same evil and unrighteous principle that persuades the seller to put off corrupt and damaged wares for good and sound, and to cozen his neighbour with merchandize that is by no means such as he reasonably expects. It is this principle that persuades the buyer also to cheat his neighbour with corrupt and false money, which he knows to be unlawful coin. For corrupt merchandize and corrupt money, false balances, light weights, and scanty measure, seem all to stand in the same rank of deceit: These are all weapons of craft and knavery to give a secret wound to their neighbour's estate, they all belong to the armory of fraud, and the magazine of unrighteousness.

It is this covetous humour that tempts the tongues of men to speak flattering falsehoods in their daily dealings, and some of them make an hourly sacrifice of truth to the gain of a penny. It is from this principle that they break their promises of payment; they withhold the money that is due to their neighbour, beyond all reasonable time, and that for no other reason but to gain by the loan of it: They delay the payment of their poor creditors for many months, or perhaps for years, and put the advantage which they make of this delay into their own purse. This is a frequent, but an unrighteous practice in

our day: For the profit that accrues by the detaining of money that is due to another beyond the customary or contracted time of payment, should doubtless be given to the person to whom the principal money was due; or at least he should have such a valuable share of it as may compensate the damage or loss he sustains by the delay.

It is a covetous desire of gain that tempts men to practise extortion, and to prey upon the necessities of those they deal with. When the buyer wants any conveniency of life, they force him to give much more than it is worth, because he stands in the utmost need of it; or they constrain the seller perhaps to part with some of his most valuable possessions for a trifle, because he is under special necessity and present distress This was the extortion which Jacob practised upon his brother Esau, when he made him sell his birth-right for a mess of pottage, while he was faint with hunting. And it is the same iniquity when we impose upon the ignorance or known unskilfulness of the persons we deal with; and especially when we make our advantage of children or servants, or of persons who confess their own ignorance, and leave the choice of the goods, or the determination of the price, to the conscience of him that sells.

We may indeed set a just value upon our own goods; but we must not set a price upon any man's pressing necessity, nor raise a tax upon his ignorance. It can never be certainly determined how much it is lawful for a trader to get by his merchandize: Doubtless he may sometimes make a greater gain of the same things than at another: And this is often necessary, in order to compensate the losses, the risks or dangers that he passes through. He may lawfully make those advantages which the change of things, and the divine providence often puts into his hands: Nor is it unlawful for him to take more of some persons than he does of others for the same merchandize; for he may treat some of his customers favourably, though he must deal righteously and justly with them all. But let him see to it that he use ingenuity towards the poor, the necessitous, and the unskilful, as well as moderation toward all men. The circumstances of things are so various, that much of the practice of justice must be left to the court of equity in every man's breast, under the sacred influence of this rule, *Do that to others which you think reasonable that others should do to you.* It is best in all doubtful and difficult cases to practise what is fair and honourable in the sight of men, and what is safe and innocent in the sight of God: for a good conscience is better than the largest gain: But where the sacred principles of virtue are over-borne by corrupt inclinations, the moral powers of the soul are stretched

at first to the lengths of moderate iniquity, and conscience is strained to the indulgence of some smaller unrighteousness: but virtue will die by degrees, and conscience will learn in time to allow bolder injustice. And then, though it may be stupified and senseless for a season, yet let the sinner know, that it will have its feeling return again, and the guilt of knavery and falsehood will torture the soul with unknown agonies here or hereafter.

But the wretched influence of this vice of covetousness is not confined only to traffic and merchandize: It spreads its unrighteousness much farther and wider: It tempts the sons and daughters of men to withhold due honour and necessary supplies from their aged parents, and exposes to great hardships in the latter end of life, those to whom we owe our life itself, and the comforts of it in our younger years. It withholds wages from the servant, and salary from him that has earned it. It forbids those who have received benefits to make a grateful return to their benefactors. It will teach a man to stop his ears at the cry of his neighbour in distress, lest it should cost some money for his relief. It refuses an alms to the starving poor, and finds an excuse for the churl, lest he stretch out his hand of bounty to a perishing family. It is so wrapped up in self, that it never considers what is due to another; and ventures to break all the rules of righteousness rather than diminish its own estate, or part with any thing it can call mine. It would suffer a church or a kingdom to sink and perish, and let the public peace be broken, and the nation dissolved, if it might but secure itself and its own possessions in the midst of those ruins. An accursed vice. An iniquity big with misery and desolation! yet it hides itself too often from conviction and reproof; it runs like a river under ground, and attempts to conceal itself under the specious disguises of frugality and virtue, while it practises all the mischiefs we have been describing.

II. Pride is another spring of injustice. But having broken up the fountain of covetousness as of a great deep, and traced it in its various streams, the labour of drying them up has employed so much time, that the pursuit of the other springs of unrighteousness must be delayed till a further season.

HYMN FOR SERMON XXV.

Christian Morality, viz. *Justice and Truth.*

GREAT God, thy holy law requires,
To curb our covetous desires,
Forbids to plunder, steal, or cheat,
To practise falsehood or deceit.

Thy Son hath set a pattern too,
He paid to God and men their due:
A dreadful debt he paid to God,
And bought our pardon with his blood.

Amazing justice! boundless love!
Do we not feel our passions move?
Do we not grieve that we have been
Faithless to God, or false to men?

Have we no righteous debt denied,
Through wanton luxury or pride?
Nor vex'd the poor with long delay,
And made them groan for want of pay?

Have we ne'er thrown a needless shame,
Or scandal on our neighbour's name?
O happy men, whose age and youth
Have ever dealt in love and truth;

But if our justice once be gone,
And leave our faith and hope alone;
If honesty be banish'd hence
Religion is a vain pretence.

SERMON XXVI.

Christian Morality, viz. Justice, &c.

PHILIP. iv. 8.—Whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, think on these things.

Οσα δικαια, οσα αγνα.

JUSTICE and truth are two of the chief bands that preserve uman society. If truth and justice perish from the earth, the ons of men would become like the savages of the wilderness, here the strong or the crafty animals prey upon *the weak, the mple, and the innocent.* The Lord God, the author of nature, a God of justice, and he has written something of this law in e consciences of men. But the God of grace has given us uch plainer rules for the practice of it, hath allured us to righeousness by sweeter motives, and hath guarded it by more awful nd solemn terrors. These things have been the subject of the ormer discourse; and that we may, as far as possible, assist owards the rooting out injustice from the hearts and lives of hristians, I have begun to point out some of the chief princiles, or springs of it.

The first which I mentioned is covetousness, a vicious weed at grows in corrupt nature, and is fruitful of a thousand unighteous actions.

I proceed now to the second, that is pride. When a person ets too high a value upon himself, and aggrandizes himself in is own esteem, he is ready to imagine that all things are ue to him, and there is very little left to become due to his neighour. The proud, as well as the covetous man, is full of self, nd he forgets the command of love to his neighbour: He treats im as if he was not made of the same clay, and lives as though e were obliged to no duty to his fellow-creatures. This is evilent in a variety of instances.

It is pride that forbids us to give due respect to those that are bove us in the family, in the church, or in the civil state: And nstead of paying the honours that are due to superiors, we are empted to treat them with insolence and scorn. Many a father n our degenerate age, has found this unhappy effect of raising is children too soon and too high: And the mother has seen her

sin, and felt it in her punishment, when she has cockered up her young offspring in pride, and thereby taught them to break the rules of justice, to slight all her authority, and make a scoff of that pre-eminence which God and nature have given her. The proud man is ready to say in his heart, "All that are around me ought to pay me respect, and do me justice," while he is regardless of the respect due to others. "Let them carry it it towards me as they ought, and I will carry it toward them as I please."

It is pride that inclines us to throw a blot here and there upon the good name of our neighbour, and to blemish his reputation, lest he should outshine us. When some honourable mention is made of another person in our company, especially if it be one of our own sex, our own rank or degree in the world, do we not feel something rising within to lessen their honour, and to stain their character? It is through this vanity and ambition of mind, that we are tempted to defame and reproach our neighbour, and to rob him of his just honour among men, and we endeavour to build our own fame and credit upon the ruin of his. But it is a sandy, or rather an impious foundation; and the fame that is built upon such ground will never stand. Pride inclines us to assume more respect than is due to ourselves, and to take it away from our neighbour, even as covetousness tempts us to take more money to ourselves than is due, and to deprive our neighbour of it. Thus both of them are opposite to the sacred rule of justice; one to that justice which we owe to our neighbour's estate, and the other to his good name.

But the evil influence of pride spreads farther also; for it teaches us to practise unrighteousness in matters of property; It instructs us in the methods of oppression, and inspires us with a wicked courage to practise it; Ps. lxxiii. 6, 7, 8. *When pride compasses men as a chain, and they wear it is a golden ornament, then violence covers them as a garment; and though their eyes stand out with fatness, and they have more than heart could wish, yet they are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression.* They gripe those that are poor, because they themselves are mighty. They refuse to pay the just demands of their neighbours, they speak loftily, and stand it out with them against all right and justice, because they are great in the world. It is the rule of justice to change places with our humble neighbour, and ask ourselves, what we should think due to us, if we were in his place. Or at least we should set ourselves and our neighbour upon the level, and consider what is just and right on both sides. But the heart of pride cannot bear such a rule, it exalts itself far above the level of mankind, and practises toward those that are around it with a superior insolence and injustice. Cursed pride,

: first-born of hell! It seized our first parents and tempted them aim at godhead, to practice injury to God himself, and assume ight to the fruit of the forbidden tree! Vile iniquity, that th tainted all the seed of Adam! It is a haughty poison that s infused into our veins with the first sin; and where shall we d the son or daughter of Eve that is not infected with it? Bles- l be the grace of God, wheresoever its dominion is broken, that it does not break out into all the works of unrigh- ousness.

The third spring of injustice among men is profuseness and xury. When persons affect to live in a manner above what eir circumstances will afford, they are tempted to intrench on the property of their neighbour, either by cheating or by olence.

It is the language of luxury, "I must indulge my appetite, r table must be furnished with a costly variety, and I must eat d drink with elegance, as is the modish phrase. I must treat r friends when they visit me, with fashionable entertainments; must keep fine company, and make a figure in the world; I ust appear in such an equipage as my neighbour allows himself, ough he be ten times richer than I am. I must have many anges of raiment, for it is a mean and vulgar thing to appear o often in the same dress: My house must be furnished after e mode, and I must shine at home and abroad in silks or in ver; for I cannot bear the thought that such or such a one ould out-shine and over-top me." Then the patrimony is ld or mortgaged to raise present supplies, and the rich food d clothing, and luxurious expences of a twelve-month, vour and swallow up seven years income, or the gain of lf their lives.

What remains then, when their own substance is not sufficit to supply their vanity, but that they make an inroad upon the operty of their neighbour? They run deep into debt with the tificer and trader, and they never concern themselves how to ake payment. The workman has built them palaces, instead such common dwellings as their character requires, and the tificers of various kinds have furnished out their bravery of parel or equipage: But the unhappy creditors are ready to arve in tattered raiment, through the oppression and injustice their luxurious neighbour. And when they make a modest mand of what is due to them, they meet with nothing but a own or a jest, and the reproachful names of saucy and imper- nent. But, *wo to him that covets an evil covetousness to his use, that he may set his nest on high;—for the stone shall cry t of the wall against the oppressor: The beam out of the timber all answer it, and shall bear witness against unrighteousness*; ab. ii. 9, 11.

This is the crying guilt of many, and very commonly practised in this city, in greater or in less degrees; but perhaps the profuse wretch pursues a bolder course of injustice, and betakes himself to robbery and plunder: He lies at watch on the high-ways, he seizes and assaults the innocent traveller, and deprives him of his wealth and every thing valuable, in order to support his own wild and extravagant expences. Luxury must be fed, though justice be starved; and luxury must be clothed, though justice go naked.

My hearers perhaps will think themselves unconcerned in all this story, and take no share of conviction to themselves, nor do I know any of them to whom half this charge belongs. But let it be considered, that men do not usually rise to this degree of madness all at once. Unrighteousness has several steps and stages in its race; if we indulge our appetites, and spread our tables, or form our apparel or our furniture but a little beyond our income, if we once begin to admit such a manner of life and expence as exceeds our estate, in order to please our own sensual or vain inclinations, or to vie with our neighbours, we expose ourselves to most evident temptations of injustice, and lead our souls into sinful snares. "We cannot live frugally as our fathers did: The fashion is altered, and we must follow it, whether the purse can bear it or no."

Hence arise the impetuous desires of hasty and extravagant gains by gaming, in order to recover what is lost by luxury. Men venture largely upon the turn of a dye, and defraud their honest creditors of their bread and life, to pay, what they call in their cant, the debts of honour. A wanton sort of justice and illegal equity! It is the luxurious fashion of life that hath filled our land with the itch of gaming; and if the turn of a wheel can entitle them to thousands, they despise the slow and tedious ways of supplying their wants by labour, business, or traffic. Thus honest industry is discouraged, and trade, which is the political life of our nation, lies groaning and expiring.

Hence proceeds the wicked custom of breaking promises to those that we deal with, and long delays of payment, till we imagine that the debt is cancelled, by being almost forgotten. A vain and criminal imagination! As though the daily increase of interest, and the patience of the creditor, could make the principal cease to be due! As though time, and unjust delay could pay debts without money.

Hence flows the unrighteous practice of borrowing without any design to pay, which is gross and shameful iniquity: I would hope none of the professors of religion have so far abandoned

all sense of righteousness. Yet there are too many, who, when once they have borrowed, grow so careless and negligent of payment, that it brings a disgrace upon their profession, and a blot upon their character. Profuse and thoughtless sinners, who run in debt to every one that will trust them for the daily conveniencies of life! Though they have no reasonable prospect of paying, yet they ask their neighbour to lend, with a free and courageous countenance, and put a bold face upon their venturous iniquity, being too proud to let their poverty be known. But the God of justice beholds their crime, and writes their names down in his book among the unrighteous. *Ps.* xxxvii. 21. *The wicked borroweth and payeth not again.*

Hence it comes to pass that there are so many bankrupts in in our days, even among the professors of strict religion: A shameful and ungodly practice, if it arise from luxury and profuseness, or from a careless neglect of their proper affairs! It was thought sufficient, in the days of our fathers, to deserve an expulsion from the church of Christ, unless they could evidently make it appear, that it was merely the unforeseen and frowning providences of God, they were reduced to this extremity.—There is many a man hath groaned away his latter years in poverty, and perhaps in a cold prison, and in most forlorn circumstances of life, by means of the profuseness of his youth: And he hath been taught to read the guilt of his luxury and injustice in a long and painful lesson.

But a profuse and sensual humour is not only the spring of unrighteousness among persons of better rank and circumstance in the world, but it tempts servants also to be unjust to their masters: They will now and then provide a treat for themselves and their friends; they must eat nicely, and drink to excess: And thus they waste their master's substance. They must keep good company in the world, and now and then spend a licentious hour or two, while their just and reasonable service at home is neglected; and perhaps the purse of the master must pay for all.

Under the same head I may bring a charge of injustice against the careless and wasteful servant, who persuades himself that his master is rich enough, and therefore he is not solicitous to buy or sell, or manage any affairs for him to the best advantage. He permits the goods of his master to be wasted or embezzled, he grows liberal and generous at his master's cost, and has no thought of the golden rule of our Saviour, to manage his master's concerns with the same frugality and conduct, as he would expect a servant should do for him. But it is time I proceed to the next particular.

The fourth occasion of injustice is sloth and idleness. For the *slothful man is a brother to him that is a great waster*; Prov. xviii. 9.

Whosoever wants the necessaries, or the conveniencies of life, is bound to obtain them by labour and diligence, if he is not possessed of them by any other methods of favourable providence. *In the sweat of thy brows shalt thou eat thy bread*, was the command given to Adam, when he was turned out of paradise, and forfeited his property in the fruits of Eden. But when once a person gets an aversion to business, when he finds a pleasure in sauntering and trifles, and indulges idleness and a lazy life; then he is tempted to seek the supports and comforts of nature by some practices of unrighteousness. *The slothful man will be clothed with rags*, unless he procure better clothing by fraud or violence; *Prov.* xxiii. 21.

Hence it is that persons learn the art of stealing, and possess themselves of the goods or the money of their neighbour by thievery. They mark out the houses in the day, and break them up at midnight for plunder. They remove the ancient land-marks, to enlarge their own borders; they violently take away flocks, and feed upon them. They go forth to their unrighteous work in the morning, and rise betimes for a prey. They reap down the corn in their neighbour's field, and the wicked gather the vintage. They cause the naked to lodge without cloathing, and take away the sheaf from the hungry. *These are they that rebel against the light, they abide not in the paths thereof.* Though God does not lay folly to them, nor punish their crimes by his immediate judgments, yet his eyes are upon their ways; *Job* xxiv. 2——23. And many times his providence brings their crimes to light, and they are punished for their iniquity by the sentence of the judge. O what a shame and scandal is it, that in a nation professing christianity, there should be such multitudes trained up to the pilfering trade, and educated for infamy, for transportation, and the gibbet!

There are others, whose hands refuse to labour, and whose temper of mind delights in idleness, but they venture not upon these bolder crimes; they learn other unrighteous arts of cheating and falsehood, and fall into the same evil practices, which I have just before described under the head of luxury. But when luxury, pride, and sloth join their forces together, the temptation to injustice becomes exceeding strong, and there are few who have power to resist it. Such was the unjust steward, whom our blessed Saviour represents in a parable, procuring himself a way of living by cheating his Lord: *Luke* xvi. 1, 2, 3, 4. He had wasted his master's goods, and he was to be cashiered from his service. What shall I do, said he, I have not been used to work, I cannot

dig; there is the sloth of the man: He had lived well in his stewardship, and was grown proud, to beg I am ashamed. Well, I can purloin no more of my Lord's estate for myself, but I can do it for his debtors; I will cheat him in his accounts, and make all his debtors my friends, by cancelling a good part of their obligations, and then I shall get a livelihood amongst them. O that all such practices had been found no where but in parables!

Some that have been reduced to poverty by idleness, and have borrowed boldly what they could never pay, yet wipe their mouths, and think themselves innocent and righteous, because they have not a sufficiency to make payment: Whereas, in truth, it is their own sloth that makes them poor, and keeps them so. Some of these idle creatures waste their days in drowsiness and inactivity. "A little more sleep, a little more slumber, so poverty comes upon them like an armed man without resistance." Others are a little more sprightly, and they spend their hours in an inquisitive impertinence, in public news and private slander, in searching and tatling of the affairs of other persons and their families, while they eat, and drink and live upon the labour of the diligent, and unjustly serve themselves out of the industry of their neighbour. So the worthless drone wastes the summer's day in buzzing and trifling, he gads abroad, and wanders with idle flight; then he returns, and feeds upon the honey that the bee has gathered, and abuses the industry of a better animal.

St. Paul takes notice of this sort of people at Thessalonica who call themselves christians, and reproves them with just severity; *We hear there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busy bodies. Now them that are such, we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread: For even when we were with you this we commanded you, that if any would not work neither should he eat*; 2 Thess. iii. 10, &c. And in his letter to the Ephesians, he exhorts the thief to diligence. *Let him that stole steal no more, but rather let him labour, working with his hands, the thing which is good;* and that not only for his own support, but that he may have to give to him that needeth; *Eph.* iv. 28. How little do those christians read their bibles! Or how little do they mind what the great apostle tells them! They profess they were never brought up to work, and give that answer roundly as a sufficient excuse for idleness: And therefore when they become poor and necessitous, they think it the duty of others to maintain them, without stretching out their hand for any thing but to beg and receive. They will apply themselves to no employment, though they are told their duty continually: Their pride, indolence, and sloth withhold them from labour, though they are called to it daily in the loudest language in which God now-a-days speaks

to his creatures; and that is the voice of reason, of scripture, and of providence.

But there is another sort of sloth and idleness, that leads on to the practice of injustice too, and that is when men are busy in their trades, and the affairs of life, but seldom look into their accounts, or perhaps keep none at all: And thus they live upon the spend, and are utterly ignorant whether their income will support it. They eat and drink with daily chearfulness, and sleep sound upon their pillow, while they know not whether their food and raiment, and even the bed they rest on, be their own or no. Perhaps they have let their accounts run long behind, they are a little jealous of their circumstances, and then it is an unpleasant and tedious task to take a thorough review of them. By this means they run on venturing and heedless, till justice overtakes them, and ruin seizes them at once. Then they see what a shameful and cruel inroad they have made upon their neighbour's property: They find then that they have fed and clothed themselves and their household out of their neighbour's estate. What shall I say to persons of this character? Their souls are generally hardened on all sides against conviction, and it is with much difficulty they are ever brought to confess their own folly, their sloth and unrighteousness. Ask thyself, O man, O woman, ask thyself this short and solemn question, "Am I willing my neighbour should deal thus with me, and spend my substance for his daily support?"

Here let it be observed, that I would always except from this accusation such as are mere children and cannot work, or such as are aged, and past all ability of labour, such as are weak and sick, and rendered thereby utterly incapable of working, and such as seek work with honest diligence, and would be glad to be employed in any thing they can do, if they could find others to employ them. Some of these indigent and necessitous persons are in every city, and they seem to be marked out by providence as the proper objects of compassion and bounty, and are not to be blended with the slothful and idle creatures in the general charge of unrighteousness.

Fifthly, The next spring of injustice is malice and envy. This is the vilest of all, and the most like the devil; for it contrives mischief, and brings injury upon others, without seeking gain and advantage to self. This is a vile iniquity, and has a great deal of the spirit of cruelty and of hell in it, where ill-nature and spite reign and triumph.

Though envy and malice awaken and excite the sinner to acts of unrighteousness and violence, and tempt us to rob our neighbour of what is his due; yet these vicious principles aim more frequently to disturb the peace, or health, and good name of

our neighbour, than to injure his estate. It is wrath and hatred that boils up the blood into fury and revenge, and moves us to smite our neighbour with the fist of wickedness; nor is the guilty passion allayed till it has practised mischief to his body, or his reputation, or his family, or to something that belongs to him. Hence proceed murders and death, and all the train of evils and injuries of the cruel and bloody kind. It was from this principle that Cain slew Abel his brother, that the sons of Jacob sold Joseph into slavery: It was from this principle that Sanballat and Tobiah joined their rage and their counsels against the Jews, that they might hinder the rebuilding of Jerusalem, and endeavour to destroy the builders, and throw down the work; *Neh.* ii. 10.

I hope there are no examples of this flagrant injustice to be found among us who profess piety. But are there none of us guilty of some lesser injuries rising from the same principle? Are there none of us that indulge our tongues to backbite and slander, to make our neighbours look odious, or to make ourselves easy or merry? This is to play the *madman, who casts abroad fire-brands, arrows, and death,—and saith, Am I not in sport?* Prov. xxvi. 18, 19. Are there none of us that delight to teaze, and vex, and torture our neighbour by disagreeable speeches and sly reproach? Do we never envy and provoke one another, contrary to the apostle's express prohibition? *Gal.* v. 26. Do we not take pleasure to repeat the things that make each other uneasy, in order to vent the gall within us, and scatter the venom upon our neighbour's good name? This is malice and unrighteousness together; a complicated crime, which one would think should be abhorred by every christian, if one did not frequently see and feel the practice of it among the professors of the name of Christ. I might well compare such creatures to a wasp or hornet, who first teaze and disquiet us with their endless humming, and ere we can get rid of them, they fix their painful sting in our flesh; though neither the pain nor the teazing vexation they give us, can procure any conveniency to those peevish insects, those noisy animals of a little angry soul.

If we are poor, this evil humour tempts us to envy the riches of our neighbour, and we magnify and exalt them beyond the truth, that we may give some colour to our splenetic and uneasy carriage. If we are afflicted, or in pain, we envy the welfare and the ease of others, we enlarge our paraphrases upon their blessings, and blacken their character, that they may appear unworthy of such favours, and worthy of our indignation and envy. "When shall the time come, O Lord Jesus, thou king of righteousness, and king of peace, when shall that day appear, that Ephraim *shall not envy Judah, nor Judah molest Ephraim?*

When shall it be that no ravenous beast shall come near Zion, and there shall be nothing to hurt or destroy in all thy holy mountain?"

The last spring of injustice that I shall mention, is unbelief, and distrust of the providence of God. When persons are in low circumstances, they are sometimes hurried by the power of this temptation to use sinful means in order to obtain what they want, or at least what they fancy they want for the comfortable support of life. The word of God has many engaging promises in it, to those who are diligent in their duty: Though *the soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing; yet the soul of the diligent shall be made fat:* Prov. xiii. 4. It is the hand of a diligent man that maketh rich, for it hath the blessing of the Lord upon it. God can increase the handful of meal in the barrel, and lengthen out the stream of oil from the little cruse, that the debts of the widow may be paid thereby, and her family find provision; 1 *Kings* xvii. 12, 14. And even since the days of miracles have ceased, there are many christians who have lived by faith, and have found wonders of support, not much inferior to this ancient miracle.

But those who know not the way of living by faith, are too ready to indulge themselves in some little pilfering or cheating methods to procure a subsistence. Thus unbelief has a plain tendency to unrighteousness, but *he that believeth shall not make haste;* Is. xxviii. 16. He that believes the care of God toward his own people, and puts his trust in his Redeemer, who is Lord of all things, he that lives upon the covenant of God daily he shall not make haste to make himself rich, or to possess himself of the comforts of life by any methods of injustice; his faith and diligence shall be rewarded at least with daily bread.

And now having finished this subject, I must beg pardon of my reader for insisting so largely on those two virtues, justice and truth, in my text. But they are of so divine a necessity to make up the character of a christian, they are of so valuable importance to the glory of the gospel, and so shameful an inroad has been made upon them in various instances in our degenerate age, that I was willing to attempt something to retrieve this part of godliness: And O may the convincing and sanctifying Spirit of God attend it with his sacred influences, that those who are called by the sacred name of christian, may never bring a blemish upon it by deserving the characters of false and unjust!

[The Second Part of this Sermon.]

The next virtue mentioned in my text, is purity; whatsoever things are pure,—think on these things. The sense of this word αγνα in the Greek, is extended so far by some critics, as to include temperance in eating and drinking, as well as chastity and mo-

esty in all our words and behaviour; and thus it signifies almost ie same with sobriety, and implies a restraint upon all the excesve and irregular appetites that human nature is subject to. nder these two heads I shall treat of purity briefly, and shew ıder each of them how the light of nature, and how the gospel Christ requires the practice of it.

I. Temperance in eating and drinking may be included in is command of purity, for we can hardly suppose the apostle nitted so necessary a virtue, and it is not mentioned at all, if it not implied here. It is not beneath the doctrine of christiity to condescend to give rules about the most common affairs human life, even food and raiment. It is a piece of impurity imitate the swine, and to gorge ourselves beyond measure; to ve up ourselves to fulfil every luscious appetite, and every luxious inclination of the taste.

An indulgence of this sort of vice, what infinite disorders th it bring upon mankind! If a man would read the character a drunkard painted in very bright and proper colours, and reive the foulest ideas of it in the fairest oratory, he cannot find a tter description than Prov. xxiii. 29—32. *Who hath woe? Who th sorrow? Who hath contentions? Who hath babbling? Who th wounds without cause? Who hath redness of eyes? They it tarry long at the wine, they that go to seek mixed wine. Look t therefore upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth its colour the cup, when it moveth itself aright.* Some men in our age ll understand what Solomon here means. *But at the last it eth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.* The pleasure will attended with intolerable pain and mortal injury, when the ess of liquor shall work like so much venom poured into the ns, and cast thee into diseases as incurable as the biting of any pent; it will do thee more mischief than an adder with all his son. There are many that have felt the words of Solomon e, when their voluptuous sins have been dreadfully recompen. with ruin to their soul and body.

But the inspired writer dwells upon the loathsome subject, l bids us mark the particular effects of it: *Thine eyes shall bed strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things;* ov. xxiii. 33. that is, says a learned paraphrast* upon the text, hy thoughts will not only grow confused, and all things appear hee otherwise than they are; but lustful and adulterous des will be stirred up, which thou canst not rule, and thy mouth ıg without a bridle, will break forth into unseemly, nasty, filthy, rrilous, or, perhaps, blasphemous language, without respect to l or man." Yea, thou shalt be, saith the wise man, as he that

* Bishop Patrick.

lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast; ver. 34. that is, "Thou wilt sottishly run thyself into the extremest hazards, without any apprehensions of danger, being no more able to direct thy course, than a pilot who snores when a ship is tossed in the midst of the sea; no more able to take notice of the peril thou art in, than he that falls asleep on the top of a mast, where he was set to keep the watch." *They have stricken me*, shalt thou say, *and I was not sick*; they have beaten me, and I felt it not. When I shall awake, I will seek it yet again; ver. 35. It is as if the wise man had said, "That to complete thy misery, thou shalt not only be mocked, and abused, and beaten, but thou shalt be as senseless as if no harm had befallen thee: And no sooner wilt thou open thine eyes, but thou wilt stupidly seek an occasion to be drunk, and be beaten again."

My friends, have ye never seen a drunkard make that odious figure, in which Solomon represents him? You find human nature is constant to itself: It appears now in Britain, just as it is described in the days of old at Jerusalem in all its vicious excesses. There is a great degree of likeness between our forefathers' intemperance, and their children of late posterity. One would think one such a spectacle as this, or the mere report of it, with an assurance of the truth, should be enough to forbid our lips the excess of liquor, and to set a guard upon ourselves in the hour of temptation.

Not only those who overwhelm themselves with strong drink, and forget reason and themselves, but those that are mighty to drink wine, have a severe censure cast upon them, and a curse in the book of God: Is. v. 11. not only *woe to them, that rise up early in the morning, that they may find strong drink*, and continue till night, till wine inflame them; but *woe to them that are mighty to drink wine*, even though they are not utterly overcome by it, to the disorder and disgrace of their understandings, verse 22. The reason is, because nature will not bear such a quantity of wine or strong liquors at first; and it is presumed men have forced nature beyond its original capacity, and thus have grown up, by degrees of sin, to such a strength in drinking. These are they that *call evil good and good evil*, and that glory in their shame.

Hearken to thy father's advice, O youth, *and despise not thy mother's counsel; hear thou, my son, and be wise, and guide thine heart in the way of temperance. Be not among wine-bibbers, amongst riotous eaters of flesh*; ver. 19. Youth is greedy of pleasure, and in danger of being corrupted by it; therefore avoid the society of drunkards and gluttons. You see they are joined together in the prohibition and threatening of the word of God, "for the glutton and the drunkard shall both come to po-

erty." A wanton indulgence of the taste will tempt men to re-
elling and riot, thence follows a neglect of all business; and
any a prodigal, who had a fair estate, is by this means become
beggar or a prisoner. Let us be watchful therefore when we
t down at a plentiful table, and put a knife, as it were, to our
roat, if we feel the danger of a sharp and wanton appetite; let
e guard of our virtue be as sharp and active as our thirst or
nger. Let us not be desirous of feasting ourselves with dain-
s, for they too often prove deceitful meat: And though they are
ver so tempting to the palate, yet they may disturb the health
the body, or indispose the mind for the service of virtue.
ut this leads me to the next general head, and that is, To con-
ler how the light of nature condemns this vice, this sort of im-
rity.

If it were my business to make a flourish with learned cita-
ns, it were an easy matter to bring the Greeks and Romans
her to pass sentence upon the glutton and the drunkard, and
the luxury of the taste; for it is too mean an indulgence either
a man or a christian. It does not become human nature to
danger the welfare of all its powers, and enslave them all to the
gle sense of tasting, "I am greater, says Seneca, and born to
eater things, than to be a slave to this body, or to live merely
become a strainer of meats and drinks." The wisest of men,
d the best writers of all ages, even in the heathen nations, have
sed their heavy censures on these impure and brutal follies,
ereby we are reduced to the rank of beasts that perish, or per-
ps sunk below them by the practices of intemperance; for there
but few of that lower rank of creatures, who swill themselves
yond the demands of nature; or, at least, beyond what nature
able to bear.

Let us argue a little upon this head from the principles of
ison, and consider that the chief designs of food are these two,
support of our nature, and the refreshment of our spirits.
erefore give food to him that is hungry, that life may be main-
ned: Give drink to him that is thirsty, to assist the supports of
, and to refresh it. Give strong drink to him that is ready to
nt, that his spirits may be recruited: and wine to him that is
avy of heart, that he may forget his sorrows; *Prov.* xxxi. 6, 7.
is evident that every thing, which goes beyond the mere neces-
of nature for its support, does not presently become sinful;
cause the refreshment of nature is also one end and design of
food. Remember that the supports of nature are designed
the God of nature to make us fit for all the services and duties
life, and the refreshments of it are ordained by the same Au-
r of nature, to render us chearful in the discharge of those du-

ties. The one is necessary to give us a capacity to perform, and the other proper to render the performance chearful and delightful to us, and to intermingle our labour with such innocent delights as may awaken our thankfulness to the bounty of our Creator.

Thence it will follow, that the rich are allowed to furnish their tables with a variety of pleasing and grateful food; and that feasts designed for chearful enjoyment of our friends, are by no means forbidden by the light of reason, or of scripture: For we gain vigour for action, by having the spirits raised and exhilerated. But it will follow also, that when we have our choice of what we shall eat or drink, we ought to determine not merely by pleasure and appetite, nor feed till we are unfit for service. If we know, or have a good guess beforehand, that this cup, or this dish, will render us unfit for the proper business of the day, or incapable of the several duties we are called to; yet if, for the sake of mere sensuality, we venture upon it, God will number it among our sins against the light of nature. Those ends therefore for which God hath ordained our various food, both in his creation and in his providence, namely, the support of nature, and its refreshment; let these be our designs in eating, and give rules for our determination what food we should partake of.

It must be granted indeed, that a sickly person may be indulged in more solicitude about food, and may make it a matter of more distinguishing choice than persons vigorous and healthy. But then the great end must still be kept in the eye, that is, the recovery of strength for future service, where they are much cut off from present work: For neither the sick nor the healthy, should live for the sake of eating, but both should eat for the sake of living and working.

Now if the light of nature requires such purity and temperance, how much more doth the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ oblige us to it?

I. It is the command of our Redeemer, "that we take heed of surfeiting and drunkenness, lest our hearts at any time be overcharged with them; *Luke* xxi. 34. And what charge doth the holy apostle give, Eph. v. 18. *Be not drunken with wine*, wherein is excess, *but be ye filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs.* Do not be so indulgent to your palate and your glass, as to let excess of wine overtake you, lest you christians should do as heathens have done, and break out into irregular songs, and licentious or profane mirth; but seek rather the largest influences of the blessed Spirit, and give a sacred loose to a devout frame: Break out into divine psalms or songs; comfort yourselves, and edify your neighbours thereby. In *Rom.* xiii. 13, 14. St. Paul advises us

how we should behave ourselves in this point; *Let us walk honestly, as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness;—but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil it in the lusts thereof.* Put on the spirit of the gospel, and the ornaments of christianity, and then you cannot for shame seek the pleasures of the brute, nor sink down into the base impurities of the animal nature: If you have put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and are his disciples indeed, then look like christians; let the very life of Christ be manifest in your lives: Live above these animal desires, these lower designs of the flesh, which is not the chief nature of the man, much less should it be the chief end of christians to gratify it.

II. Let christians consider, that the original ruin of their natures, soul and body, arose from the indulgence of a foolish appetite. When our mother Eve saw the fruit of the forbidden tree, she thought it was pleasant to the eye, and good for food: She tasted it herself, and tempted Adam to the sin that ruined him and all his offspring. When therefore a temptation to this sort of guilt appears, let us think of all the miseries of our fallen state, and not dare to repeat that crime, which had such dismal consequences. It brought iniquity, pain, and death into human nature, and begun all that dishonour to God, and all that mischief among men, that ever was found in this lower world.

III. Every saint ought to have a mortal quarrel with the flesh, because he carries about the seeds of iniquity in it, and the springs of perverse appetite which ought always to be kept under, lest our very spirits become carnal, and we lose our heavenly crown. Therefore saith the apostle; 1 Cor. ix. 27. *I keep under my body, and bring it under subjection,* and endeavour to be temperate in all things, that running in the christian race, I may obtain the prize. It is the business of a christian to eat and drink in due season, for strength and refreshment, not for luxury and drunkenness, which Solomon forbids to princes; *Eccl.* x. 17. It was an excellent saying of that holy man, Mr. Joseph Allein; "I sit down to my table not to please my appetite, or to pamper my flesh, but to maintain a servant of Jesus Christ, that he may be fit for the Lord's work."

IV. The saints should be pure and holy; even in the affairs of the natural life; for they have meat to eat, that the world knows not of: they drink of the pleasures that flow from God, and from his covenant; and therefore should not be over-solicitous about pleasing their meaner appetites. Those that indulge themselves in carnal delicacies, and make enquiry for the pleasures of the flesh, as the main business of life, what shall I eat, and what shall I drink? Those that live in a round of sensuality, they debase their souls, make themselves unfit for the duties and

pleasures of a christian, unfit for divine communications, for holy fellowship, heavenly meditation, and lively exercises of faith, upon unseen things; they damp their zeal for God, blunt their relish for religious delights, and are perpetually defiling their own consciences. These are they that *make their God their belly*, while they profess to be christians. But the apostle, in *Phil.* iii. 18, 19. tells us, "whatsoever they profess, *they are enemies of the cross of Christ*, and I cannot speak of it, says he, without weeping."

Now if there be any such sinners amongst us, such slaves to a paltry appetite, that make it a business of too solemn and solicitous enquiry, "How we shall regale the palate, and gratify the taste:" If there are any of us that know not how to forbid ourselves a savoury or luscious dish, even though we know or expect it will discompose the flesh or the mind: If we have not temperance enough to deny the superfluous or excessive glass, when it comes to our turn, nor virtue nor courage enough to refuse it, let us take our share in the reproofs of this discourse; and let us remember that we have had fair warning this day from the word of God, that we may not drown our souls in sensual indulgences, and make ourselves unfit for the duties of life, or for the business or the joy of heaven.

HYMN FOR SERMON XXVI.

Christian Morality, viz. *Temperance*.

IS it a man's divinest good,
To make his soul a slave to food?
Vile as the beast, whose spirit dies,
And has no hope above the skies?

Can meats or choicest wines procure
Delights that ever shall endure,
Was not I born above the swine,
And shall I make their pleasures mine?

Am I not made for nobler things?
Made to ascend on angel's wings?
Shall my best powers be thus debas'd
And part with heaven to please my taste?

Can I forget the fatal deed,
How Eve brought death on all her seed,
She tasted the forbidden tree,
Anger'd her God, and ruin'd me.

Was life designed alone to eat?
What is the mouth, or what the meat?
Both from the ground derive their birth,
And both shall mix with common earth.

Great God new-mould my sensual mind
And let my joys be more refin'd;
Raise me to dwell among the blest,
And fit me for thy heavenly feast.

SERMON XXVII.

Christian Morality, viz. *Chastity*, &c.

PHILIP. iv. 8.—Whatsoever things are pure, &c.——think on these things.

Οσα αγνα, &c.

PURITY of heart and life, in the perfect beauty of it, belongs o no man since our original apostacy. That foul and shameful eparture from God, has rendered us all unholy and unclean. ut we are recalled to seek our ancient glory, by the messengers f heaven, and the ministry of the gospel. The apostle exhorts s to it in the text. If the word pure be taken in its largest ex- ent, it may include in it temperance in meats and drinks, as well s chastity in behaviour. You have heard already a discourse of emperance, with so hateful an account of the crimes of gluttony nd drunkenness, that I hope my hearers have conceived a sacred version of such sensualities.

Let us now proceed to the second sense implied in the word, nd that is, modesty and chastity of speech and behaviour. This a most eminent, and most undeniable part of that purity, which t. Paul here requires; and this, in many of his epistles he insists pon as necessary, in order to make up the character of a chris- an, and render it honourable; and St. Peter recommends it to e pious women in his day, as a means of the conversion of eir husbands, who were gentiles: *That they who obeyed not he word of the gospel, might be won to a* good esteem of chris- anity, *while they beheld the chaste conversation of their wives;* Pet. iii. 1, 2.

This virtue stands in opposition to those several vices, which re distinguished by different names in scripture, such as adultery, ornication, lasciviousness. 1. Adultery, when one of the per- ons who are guilty of impure embraces, is under the sacred onds of marriage. By the commission of this sin there is injury lone to another family, and thus it is not only an offence against he laws of purity, but a violation of the laws of justice. 2. For- ication, when both the guilty persons are free and unmarried. t has been sufficiently proved by many writers, that this is utterly nlawful, however some have attempted to varnish the guilt, and xcuse the crime. 3. Lasciviousness, which consists in giving a

loose to those impure thoughts, words, and actions, which have an apparent tendency toward the sins before-mentioned. Besides these, there are other names and instances of unclean abominations, which I wish could be utterly rooted out from human nature, by burying them in everlasting silence.

If I were to fetch arguments from reason and the light of nature, I might might make it appear that these things are criminal and contrary to those rules of morality, which were written in the heart of man. And perhaps they would have appeared in the same guilty colours to all men, if the light of nature were not obscured by corrupt passions, and licentious appetite. The practice of these impure vices is inconsistent with the great ends for which God has formed our natures, has raised us above the beasts that perish, and has inclined mankind to form themselves into societies for mutual benefit. The brutes, who have no nature superior to the animal are not governed by the same laws: But the God of nature, who has made us compound beings and (shall I say?) hath joined an animal and an angel together to make up a man, expects that the angel should govern the animal in all its natural propensities and confine it within the rules of religion and the social life.

These vices are also contrary to the solemn ordinances of marriage which the blessed God instituted in paradise in a state of innocency, and designed to continue through all generations. If these impurities of conversation were publicly permitted, all the tender and most engaging names of relation and kindred, such as father, sister, and brother, would be confounded, and almost abolished among mankind; and what dismal consequences would hence ensue? In what helpless circumstances would children be then brought into this world? And many of the ends of human society would become frustrate and vain.

I confess indeed, that several of these vices were practised in the heathen world without any inward remorse of the mind, without private reproof or public shame. Some of these impurities were allowed by the laws of their country; some were indulged at festivals, and sometimes they were mingled with their religious ceremonies, and made part of the worship of their gods; Idol gods! Abominable religions! Base and shameful worshippers! *For it is a shame,* saith the apostle, *even to speak of those things that are done in secret; those unfruitful works of darkness:* Eph. v. 11, 12. Yet there have been several of the grave, the sober, and the wisest among the Gentiles, who being constrained by the mere force of reason, have spoke against these corrupt practises, and have adorned the virtue of chastity with many honourable encomiums.

But how doubtful soever this duty hath been reckoned

ıong the heathen nations, yet it is made necessary by the prin-
ıles of the christian religion, and a strong and severe guard of
ohibitions and threatenings is set all around to secure the prac-
e of it. Now that I may speak of this subject as becomes me,
d recommend it in language pure and undefiled, I shall set
fore you some of these scriptures, that bear witness against
the violations of it, under the following heads:

I. The express precepts of the law of God demand the first
ıce in this catalogue of divine testimonies against impurity, for
ey were delivered at Mount Sinai to many hundred thousands
once, they were ushered in with lightning, and pronounced
th thunder. *Ex.* xx. 14. *Thou shalt not commit adultery.* This
the seventh command: And that there may not be the least
ıdency toward this sin, the tenth command is set as a preservative
d defence, *thou shalt not* so much as *covet thy neighbour's wife,*
rse 17. In this epitome and sum of the laws of God, whereby
rules his creatures, which is called the decalogue or ten com-
ındments, you find this vice of impurity is twice forbidden;
ce in the perfect act, and again in the criminal wish and inten-
n. Observe here, that though the words of these commands
ectly point to adultery, yet it appears by the very reason of
ings, as well as from other passages of scripture, that all un-
aste thoughts, words, and actions, are here forbidden, as our
unger years have been taught in the catechism.

Nor is this a law that belonged only to the Jews, for the
ew Testament mentions and enjoins this command with the rest,
ıich are of equal force under the gospel. The law forbids all
ınner of lust, and saith; *Thou shalt not covet;* Rom. vii. 7.
he great apostle puts the Thessalonians in mind of what he had
ught them as the law of Christ. 1 *Thess.* iv. 2, 3, 4, 5. *For*
know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus. For
is is the will of God, even your sanctification, that you should
stain from fornication: That every one of you should know
w to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; not in the
st of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God.
is as much as if he had said, it is a dishonour to christianity,
ıd a step of return to heathenism, to give a loose to impure
sts. He repeats the same thing; *Eph.* iv. 17—21. "This I
y therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk
t as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their minds, having
e understanding darkened, and being alienated from the life of
od through the ignorance that is in them; because of the blind-
ss of their heart: Who being past feeling, have given them-
lves over to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greedi-
ss. But ye have not so learned Christ;" "if so be ye
ıve been led by him, and taught the truth as it is in Jesus."
ı vain ye profess to have learned the truth as it is in Jesus, or

to have put on Christ, while you practise the same abominations as ye did before, while ye walk and live as the heathen world.

II. The hateful description of these sins which is given us by the holy writers, should print the same odious image of them upon our minds, and for ever forbid the practice. Solomon, a great king, and a man of excellent wisdom, had well known the mischief and madness of this sort of vice; he gives his son the most solemn charge against it in various parts of the book of Proverbs, more especially in the vi. and vii. chapters, which he spends entirely upon this theme, and in the ii. and vi. and the ix. chapters, where he applies near half of them to the same design; wherein after he has shewn the insinuating flatteries of the wanton woman he never fails to give notice of the terrible attendants of those that follow her. *For her house inclines to death, and her paths unto the dead; none that go to her return again, neither take they hold of the paths of life.* There is scarce any iniquity that does so effectually harden the heart, and prevent all repentance. *Let not thine heart therefore decline to her ways; go not astray in her paths: For she has cast down many wounded, yea, many strong men have been slain by her: Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.* This leads me to the next particular.

III. If we consider the dismal effects of these impure practices, as they are recorded in sacred history, they should keep our souls awake, and keep us always to the watch, lest we be ensnared. Behold Sampson the strongest of men, who was a holy Nazarite, and devoted to God; how was he brought down shamefully from the heights of his glory to prison and slavery, to blindness and death by the love of strange women! Behold the Jewish hero lying like a thoughtless fool upon the lap of Delilah, while the *seven sacred locks of his head were shaven*, and his divine strength *went from him, for the Lord departed!* Behold the wretched captive with his eyes bored out by the Philistines, bound with fetters of brass, and grinding in the prison-house! Behold the man who was once their terror, now become their sport, their mockery, and their laughing-stock in the house of Dagon their god: See him there crushed to pieces, and expiring under the weight of his own revenge upon his Philistine enemies; and all this for the love of a harlot! Mark the mischiefs, the calamities, and the bloodshed that pursued the house of David, when adultery and guilt in the matter of Uriah had provoked his God! See how sin and death made wide inroads into his household! See there his son Amnon slain by his brother Absalom for the folly he had wrought in Israel, and the incest with his sister Tamar? Think of Solomon the wisest of men, whose heart was enticed away by strange women from the God and religion of his fathers, when he paid such profane and

iminal regard to the idols of his mistresses, as to build temples r them near the temple of Jehovah; and "the Lord was gry with Solomon, when his wives turned away his heart after her gods, and he rent the kingdom from him in the days of his n Rehoboam," and made a long and fatal separation between e tribes of Israel for many generations. And, to name no ore, "turn your eyes to Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities the plain, *giving themselves over to fornication, and going ter strange flesh*; mark how the Lord *rained fire and brimstone t of heaven upon them*, and they are *set forth for an example ffering the vengeance of eternal fire*; Jude 7.

IV. Think of the dreadful threatenings that are denounced ainst impure sinners in the word of God, and you will find ese are flaming witnesses against their practice; Hos. iv. 1—5, The Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, cause of killing, stealing, and adultery: therefore shall the nd mourn." And God seems to forbid the prophets to give em reproof, as though he resolved to destroy them. *Let no an strive and reprove another.* His mercy and forgiveness em to be put to a stand; Jer. v. 7, 9. "How shall I par- on thee for this? saith the Lord; thy children have forsaken e when I fed them to the full, they then committed adultery, nd assembled themselves in troops in the harlots' houses. Shall not visit them for these things, saith the Lord? and shall nt my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" When the postle Paul had represented this sort of vice in 1 Cor. vi. 18,). "as a defilement of the body, which is the temple of God, nd the habitation of the Holy Spirit;" he adds this word of rror; iii. 17. "If any man defile the temple of God, him all God destroy; for the temple of God is and ought to be ly," and not kept as a nest for unclean vermin. "Be not de- ived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor ose who indulge vile impurities, shall inherit the kingdom of od;" 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. *Such were some of you*, indeed, says t. Paul to his converts, *but ye are washed and sanctified* from ese pollutions, or you could never have been saved. There- re saith the same holy writer, "let neither fornication, nor any nclean practices be so much as once named amongst you as be- meth saints;" that is, let them never be named without abhor- nce. "For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor any nclean person, nor covetous man who is an idolater, hath any heritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man ceive you with vain words; for because of these things cometh e wrath of God upon the children of disobedience;" Eph. v. —6. The visions of St. John in the book of the Revelation, onounce the doom of *whoremongers* with the rest of notorious

sinners, and give them "their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death; Rev. xxi. 8. How impiously bold are those sinners, who dare venture through all these terrors to gratify a sensual appetite! Who can rush upon the point of the avenging sword of God, and plunge themselves into everlasting burnings, to taste the deceitful baits of impure and forbidden pleasure!

Before I conclude this head, I would just hint a few directions to those who would preserve their modesty and virtue, and prevail against all temptations to impurity.

1. Set a severe watch upon your eyes and your heart. Keep all the powers of nature under a proper discipline, and guard all the avenues of the soul. Secure your senses without, and your fancy within, as much as possible, from all allurements of this kind. Let us remember that sin often begins in the imagination, and therefore we must establish a strict guard upon our roving thoughts, and reduce them when they first begin to go astray. We must lay a strong chain of restraint upon those endless wanderers; for our Saviour himself tells us, Out of the heart proceed adulteries and fornications, which defile the man; Mat. xv. 19.

We must make a self-denying covenant with our eyes, that we may not look upon temptation, lest we be led astray from the paths of purity. Our blessed Lord himself gives us a sufficient caution, when he explains the seventh commandment; Mat. v. 28. *I say unto you that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.* When our Saviour forbids a wanton look, he requires that we put a veil upon our eyes, lest like wandering stars or foolish fires they betray us into foul and miry pits of pollution, or lead us to deep and dangerous pollutions.

Avoid all impure representations, pictures, and images: Turn your eyes from immodest sights, and your ears from polluted language, whether it be in discourse, or writing, a lewd jest, or a wanton song. Let them not entertain you, though they may be attended and adorned with never so many colours of wit, and charms of music. Romances and novels, and invented stories of forbidden love, have painted over these impurities with shining eloquence, and awakened the same foolish passions in the reader. O how unhappily has the art of verse, which was first consecrated to the service of the temple, been prostituted to the vilest purposes, to give gay colours to temptation, and gild over the foulest images of iniquity! And what a multitude of souls may date the commencement of their guilt and ruin from the time when they began to frequent the poisonous entertainments of the stage! Their ears which were shocked at

ıt with some of the coarse and foul expressions of modern nedy, by degrees are hardened to bear the most offensive lan-age: Their modesty and blushing dies and vanishes by de-ees, till at last they learn to relish the greatest pollutions of the atre, and perhaps put the fable into practice.

As faith and salvation come by hearing, so iniquity and ever-ting death come sometimes by hearing too. And what we uld not hear, surely we should not speak. Let us then set a ard upon our tongues, lest they border upon forbidden language. *filthiness, no foolish talking, no corrupt communication must ceed out of our mouths*; Eph. iv. 29. and v. 4. We should t affect those speeches of a double meaning, which lead the oughts away to lewd and wanton conceits, and make foul im-essions upon the mind. Let your ears hate to be treated with ch indecencies, nor let our lips dare to treat others so.

2. Do not make too rich provisions for the feeding of the sh; indulge not yourselves on the delicacies of the taste, nor the luxury of excessive sleep: Both of these may incline ani-al nature to licentious desires: Stand afar off from gluttony d excess of wine, nor pamper the body beyond the just sup-rt, and due refreshment of nature. The holy apostle in his ohibitions, couples "chambering and wantonness with rioting d drunken practice;" Rom. xiii. 13. and calls them all works darkness. It is a good remark of Kempis, a devout papist in rmer days, "Bridle the appetites of the palate, get a sove-ignty over them, and you will be better able to master every her appetite."

3. Always employ yourselves in something innocent and eful, that may engage the powers of the body, or the mind, or th, that so temptation may never find you idle. The springs the sin of Sodom were *fulness of bread, and abundance of idle-ss; therefore they grew haughty, and committed abomination fore the Lord*; Ezek. xvi. 49, 50. This is an advice of rome, one of the christian fathers. Be still doing some work, at the devil, when he comes to tempt, may always find thee sy. Where you are in danger of these sins, put yourselves on a necessity of diligence all the day, that you may have no ne nor room for wild imaginations nor impure indulgences.

4. Avoid the seasons, the places, and the objects of tempta-n, as far as it is consistent with the necessary duties of life: For that hath no caution about him, and is not afraid of being mpted, he is not acquainted with human weakness, nor is he so uch afraid of sin as he ought to be.

5. Maintain an everlasting and awful sense of the presence God thy Maker, thy Governor, and thy Judge. Remember e Lord beholds the secret workings of the heart, and the foul

practices of darkness and midnight. There is not a place where the eye of God cannot come. What an honourable character hath young Joseph acquired in the word of God, and his name stands recorded with renown in divine history through all ages, for his flight from the allurements of an immodest woman: The guard which he continually placed upon his virtue, was the all-seeing eye of heaven. "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Gen. xxxix. 9.

6. Get those scriptures written in your hearts, and ready at all times in your memories, which may be the most effectual antidotes and preservatives against all forbidden pleasure. This was the ancient practise of the saints. Ps. cxix. 11. "Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee. The word of God is the sword of the Spirit, to put to flight, and to slay whole armies of iniquity.

7. Fly daily to the mercy-seat for divine aid: Commit thy soul and body to the keeping of Christ; he is exalted and authorized to take care of sinners, who make him their refuge: he is also compassionate and ready to succour the tempted. There is cleansing virtue in the blood of Christ to wash away the foulest guilt, and to sprinkle the conscience of the humble penitent with peace and pardon: and there is all-sufficient power and grace with him to subdue the most raging vices. Make haste to him by humble faith, and most importunate prayer: Continue instant at the throne: Never rest till he hath by his providence and his grace delivered you from the dangerous temptation, or made you conqueror over the sin that easily besets you. There are a thousand souls in heaven, who were once conflicting here with the same impure temptations, but they gained the victory by the blood and Spirit of Christ, and are made more than conquerors through him who hath loved them.

I fear I have trespassed upon my hearers, in dwelling thus long on this dangerous theme. It is time to retire, and end my discourse. Those who have a mind to be better furnished with weapons and divine armour against these enemies of purity and virtue, I would recommend to them three books, where they may find abundant provision: And these are Mr. Ostervald's Treatise of Uncleanness, Mr. Henry's Four Discourses against immorality, and Mr. Baxter's Christian Directory, tome 1 chap. 8. part 5. And may the holy and pure Spirit, who attended at the baptism of our Saviour in the form of a dove, which is an emblem of chastity, may he give these waters of the sanctuary a divine efficacy to purify the souls of polluted sinners, and to guard the innocent and the tempted from these dangerous pollutions!

HYMN FOR SERMON XXVII.

Christian Morality, viz. Chastity.

THE Lord, how great his majesty,
How pure are all his ways,
Sinners unclean offend his eyes,
Nor stand before his face.

Thou hast ordain'd immortal woes,
And everlasting fire,
To be the just reward of those
Who follow loose desire.

I hear, I read the dreadful doom
Of Sodom; in thy word;
And dares a feeble worm presume
Thus to provoke the Lord?

Dear Saviour, guard me by thy grace,
From thoughts and words unclean,
Nor let temptation gain success
To draw my soul to sin.

SERMON XXVIII.

Christian Morality, viz. *a Lovely Carriage,* &c.

PHILIP. iv. 8.—Whatsoever things are lovely——think on these things.

Οσα προσφιλη, &c.

MAN was a lovely creature in his first formation and innocence, however he has been debased and dishonoured by the fall. Now there is nothing in all the religion of Christ but what tends to restore man to the excellencies of his original state, or to exalt him above them, and to render him all over amiable. To this end truth and sincerity are recommended to him in the gospel, with a venerable decency in all his conduct. To this end he is required to practise justice to his neighbour, and to keep himself pure and chaste from all the vices of sensuality. Thus far we have proceeded in improving the text. And the man who has attained thus far, has many lovely qualities belonging to him, such as lay a foundation for a good report, and deserve our praises.

Yet there are many things in human conversation, which do not directly fall under the commands of truth and gravity, justice and purity: These the apostle recommends to the Philippians, under the following characters, viz. things that are lovely, that are of good report, deeds of virtue, and worthy of praise.

The things that are lovely, are such as look well among men, and have a good appearance in the eyes of the world: Those things that gain the love of our follow-creatures: Not merely such religious practices, as make us beloved by fellow-christians, but such a temper and conduct as commands the esteem and respect even of the ungodly, and those that profess not strict religion. This ought to be the carriage of the saints of the Most High, they should practise those things that are grateful and pleasing to human nature, so far as innocence allows: those things that may recommend our conversation to our neighbours, and procure the love of all men. Is it not a very desirable thing to have it said of any particular christian, all that know him love him; he hath no enemies but those that are unacquainted with

a, unless it be such as hate him upon the same ground as the
vil doth, and that is because of his piety and goodness? But
explain this more fully, and impress it with more power upon
ery one of our consciences, I will descend to particular instan-
of a lovely carriage. And here I shall mention but these
r, viz. prudence, moderation, humility, meekness, patience,
d love.

I. Prudence is a lovely quality. This teaches us to speak
ery word, and perform every action of life at a proper time,
the proper place, and toward the proper person. It is pru-
nce that distinguishes our various behaviour toward our fellow-
atures, according to their different ranks and degrees among
nkind, or the different relations in which we stand to them. It
a very desirable excellency to know when it is proper to speak,
d when it is best to keep silence; at what seasons, and in what
npany we should awaken our zeal, and exert our active powers;
when we should hide ourselves, or put a bridle upon our lips,
d sit still, and hear.

Prudence is of infinite use in all the affairs of life and religion:
or is there any hour of the day, nor any place wherein we
end that hour, whether alone or in public, but gives occasion
some exercise of this virtue. It does not belong to human
ture to possess this in perfection: Perfect prudence dwells with
d alone, God the most lovely of beings: He that comes nearest
it, is the wisest of men, and he gains the love and high esteem
all that are near him; for his conduct in life is of singular ad-
ntage to those that converse with him, as well as to himself.
is man is consulted by his friends as an earthly oracle, and
his advice he saves many from ruin. Thus he wins and wears
eir honour and their love.

There are many good qualities both of the natural and moral
nd that must meet together, to make up a prudent man. He
ust be furnished with a memory of things past, and with just
d proper observations made upon them, that he may know
w to improve every opportunity and occurrence of life to the
st purposes when the same occasions return. There is no pru-
nce without some degrees of experience. But experience alone
not sufficient; he should have also a wide extent of soul, and
able to take a large and comprehensive survey of the concur-
nt circumstances of things present: And he must be blessed
th a solid judgment, that by putting many things at once into
balance, he may find which outweighs the rest, and de-
mine his present conduct thereby. He must have a degree
sagacity, to foresee future events, according to the usual
sequences of things in this mortal state. The prudent man

foresees the evil, and hideth himself; but the simple pass on, and are punished; Prov. xxii. 3. that is, They suffer for their want of prudence and foresight. And besides all these, he should be a man of firm and steady resolution to go through difficulties, and to put in practice what his judgment has determined.

Rash and ungoverned passions are great enemies of this virtue. Both these push a man onward to a hasty and irregular conduct. His lips multiply folly, and his hands practise it through the impatience of his spirit. His unguarded talk, and precipitant actions plunge himself into snares, and sometimes involve his acquaintance in the same mischief.

There are other characters also inconsistent with prudence, such as an unthinking and an unsteady temper. The thoughtless person lives at a venture, walks always at random, and seems to aim at nothing. He enjoys the present hour indeed, talking and acting according to the mere appearances of things. He is content with a slight sudden view of any thing without recollection or forethought; and in a most literal sense takes no thought for the morrow. The fickle and inconstant man, he may aim at something indeed, and have honest designs in his head, but is ever changing the means to attain them, and pursues nothing with that steadiness that prudence requires, or that the necessity of human affairs demands of every man that would be wise and happy. Such men may be pitied as weak and silly, but they are seldom esteemed, or much beloved in the world, while prudence is so much wanting.

There is no necessity that I should cite special parts of the word of God, to encourage us to seek this most amiable quality, since the recommendations of true wisdom, both human and divine, are scattered up and down through all the sacred writings: And the Spirit of God has given us one or two books on purpose to teach us prudence; these are Ecclesiastes and the Proverbs of Solomon. Nor can I propose any better direction to gain universal wisdom, that to read the book of Proverbs often with diligence and humble prayer.

II. Moderation is another lovely quality. It teaches us to maintain a medium between those wild extremes, into which human nature is ready to run upon every occasion.

When a warm and imprudent talker adorns some common character with excessive praises, and carries it up to the stars; the moderate man puts in a cautious word, and thinks it is sufficient to raise it half so high. Or when he hears a vast and unreasonable load of accusation and infamy thrown upon some lesser mistakes in life, the moderate man puts in a soft word of excuse, lightens the burden of reproach, and relieves the good name of

ıe sufferer from being pressed to death. When he sees oppres-
on and violence practised among his neighbours, the justice of
s soul directs him to take the part of the injured person, and
s own moderation and goodness inclines him to do it in such a
anner, as may calm and suppress the resentment of the oppres-
d, and soften and melt the oppressor into compliance with the
ıles of justice. Thus he reconciles them both, without giving
fence to either.

When any sects of christians seem to be carried away with
e furious torrent of some prevailing notions, or some unneces-
ıry practices, some special superstition, or a contentious spirit,
e moderate man tries to shew how much of truth and goodness
ay be found amongst each party, where all agree to hold Christ
esus the head; though he dares not renounce a grain of truth or
ecessary duty, for the sake of peace, and he would contend
rnestly, where providence calls him, for the essential articles
faith which were once delivered to the saints; for he knows
e wisdom that is from above is first pure, and then peaceable;
mes iii. 17. Yet he takes this occasion to prove that some
uths or some practices, are articles of less importance to the
ristian life; that they are not worthy of such unchristian
ıarrels; and thus he attempts, as far as possible, to reconcile the
ıgry disputers. Sometimes he has the happiness to shew them
th that they fight in the dark; he explains their opinions and
eir contests, and puts the best sense upon both of them: And
hen he hath brought them into the light, he makes it appear that
ey are friends and brethren; and that religion and the gospel
e safe on both sides, if they would dwell together without
ghting, but that it is sorely endangered by their battles. So St.
aul dealt with the Jewish and gentile christians, and assured
em that they both belonged to the kingdom of God, and the
urch of Christ, though they quarrelled about flesh, and herbs,
d holy-days. How lovely, how glorious, how desirable is such
character as this!

I confess when a party-spirit runs high among the different
cts of religion, or the different divisions of mankind, this most
ıiable virtue is called by the scandalous names of indifferency,
d lukewarmness, and trimming; and it sustains a world of
proaches from both the quarrelling parties. Moderation,
ough it is the blessed principle, which awakens and assists men
become peace-makers, yet at the same time when it enters into
s battle to divide the contenders, it receives an unkind stroke
om either side. This the reconciler expects, and he bears it for
s sake of union and love.

The moderate man in cases of private property or interest,

does not insist upon the utmost of his own right with a stiff and unyielding obstinacy, but abates of his just pretensions for the sake of peace; and what he practises himself, he persuades others to practise in the like contests. This is that moderation and gentleness, which the great apostle recommends a few verses before my text. Phil. iv. 5. *Let your moderation be known unto all men.* And our blessed Lord himself gives the moderate man this illustrious encomium, blessed are the meek, who submit rather than quarrel, for they shall inherit the earth. *Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God*; Mat. v. 5—9. Happy souls whom the God of truth, and the God of peace, acknowledges for his children, and to whom he promises a large inheritance!

And let it be observed also, that whatsoever hard usage the sons of peace may meet with, while the ferment of parties is hottest, and the storm is high, yet when the clamour and rage are sunk and calm, when the party-fury hath spent itself, and is grown cool enough to suffer men to bethink themselves, and to see all things in their true colours, then the man of moderation stands approved of men as well as of God; the divine virtue appears in its own lovely form, and receives a becoming share of honour.

III. Humility is a lovely virtue. It is beautiful and becoming for a man to divest himself of all affected grandeur, and not to exalt his head above his neighbour. O that we were all clothed with humility! It is an ornament that becomes sinners well. Let us put it on with our daily raiment, and strive to vie with each other which shall practise this grace in the greatest perfection.

How unlovely a carriage is it to boast ourselves of any superior quality we possess, or to assume lofty airs, because we have more money than our neighbours! To aggrandize ourselves in our own esteem, in our own language, in our behaviour, because we fancy ourselves to be better dressed, or better fed than our fellow-creatures! And if we have a little honour put upon us by the providence of God, it is a criminal vanity for us to grow haughty and insolent upon that account. I am in pain whensoever I hear a man treat his servant as he does his dog: as though a poor man were not made of the same clay, nor born of the same ancient race as his master: As though Adam, whose name is dust, was not our common father, or a lord had not the same original as other men.

Nay, the nobler possessions of the mind, ingenuity and learning, and even grace itself, are no sufficient ground for pride. It is a comely thing to see a man exalted by many divine gifts, and yet abasing himself. It is a lovely sight to behold a person

ell adorned with virtue and merit, and glorified in the mouths all men, and yet concealing himself: To see a man of shining orth drawing, as it were, a curtain before himself, that the orld might not see him, while the world do what they can to do m justice, and draw aside the veil to make his merit visible. ot that a man of worth is always bound to practise conceal- ent; this would be to rob mankind of the blessing God has de- gned for them, and to wrap up his talents, in the unprofitable ıpkin. But there are occasions wherein a worthy and illustrious ·rson may be equally useful to the world, and yet withdraw him- lf from public applause. This is the hour to make his humility ›pear.

How graceful and engaging is it in persons of title and ıality to stoop to those that are of a mean degree, to converse eely at proper seasons with those that are poor and despicable the world, to give them leave to offer their humble requests, or metimes to debate a point of importance with them: Not all e dignity of their raiment can render them half so honourable this condescension does; for nothing makes them so much like od. The High and Holy One, who inhabits eternity, stoops ›wn from heaven to visit the afflicted, and to dwell with the poor. nd surely, when we set ourselves before the divine Majesty, we ·e meaner and more contemptible in his eyes, than it is possible r any fellow-creature to be in ours; he humbles himself to be- ›ld princes.

It must be allowed indeed, that where God and the world ıve placed any person in a superior station, and given him a nsible advancement above his fellow-creatures, he is not bound renounce the honours that are his due, nor to act beneath the gnity of his character and state. This would be to confound l the beautiful order of things in the natural, civil, and religious ·e. But there are cases and seasons that often occur, when ·eat degrees of humility may be practised without danger of ıking one's own character, or doing a dishonour to our station the world. There is an art of maintaining state with an air of odesty, nor is there any need to put on haughty and scornful rs, in order to secure the honours of a tribunal, or the highest ·ces of magistracy. I have known a man who acted in an ıalted station with so much condescension and candour, that all ·en agreed to love and honour him so far, that it was hard to say, hether he was most honoured, or most beloved.

How amiable a behaviour is it in younger persons, when ·spect is paid to age, and the honour is given to the hoary head ıat nature and scripture join to require; Lev. xix. 32. "Thou ıalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old

man: and fear thy God: I am the Lord. Though the character of the aged person, in respect of riches, quality, and learning, may be much inferior, yet the wisdom that is naturally supposed to be derived from long experience, lays a foundation for this superior honour. And I look upon it as a part of the shame and just reproach of our day, that there is such a licentious insolence assumed by youth to treat their elders with contempt. But so much the more lovely is the carriage of those who, in spite of evil custom, treat old age with reverence, and abhor the pert and petulant indignities that some of their companions cast upon the writings and counsels of their ancestors,

And here I beg leave also humbly to admonish my fathers, that they practise the lovely grace of condescension, when they converse with those that are young. I entreat them to permit a youth of an inquisitive genius, to propose an argument for some farther improvement of knowledge, or to raise an objection against an established doctrine, and not to answer him with an imperious frown, or with the reproaches of heresy or impertinence. I beseech them to indulge the rising generation in some degrees of freedom of sentiment, and to offer some demonstration for their own opinions, besides their authority, and the multitude of their years. The apostle Peter's advice may be addressed to persons of all ages and characters; 1 Pet. v. 5. *Ye younger, submit yourselves to the elder: Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility; for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.* If we have more knowledge than others, how lovely is our conduct, when we teach and instruct them, not like sovereigns of their faith, and dictators to their understanding, but in a way of friendly conversation, and mutual improvement? If any thing occurs to be debated, it is a sign of modesty to yield to the force of argument, and not to resolve before-hand to be infallible and obstinate, as though we were exempted from the common frailty of human nature, and free from all possibility of mistake. While we are arguing with others, in order to convince them, how graceful a thing it is, when we have the power of the argument on our own side, to keep ourselves from insult and triumph! how engaging a behaviour toward our opponent, when we seem to part as though we were equal in the debate, while it is evident to all the company, that the truth lies wholly on our side!

Yet I will own there are seasons, when the obstinate and the assuming disputant should be made to feel the force of an argument, by displaying it in its victorious and triumphant colours: But this is seldom to be practised, so as to insult the opposite party, except in cases where they have shewn a haughty and insufferable insolence. Some persons perhaps can hardly be taught

humility without being severely humbled; and yet where there is need of this chastisement, I had rather any other hand should be employed in it than mine.

IV. Meekness is another of the lovely graces. This is contrary to wrath and malice, and all the angry passions, as humility stands in opposition to pride. As there are generally some secret workings of pride in the heart, when a man gives indulgence to his wrathful passions; so where a person has thoroughly learned the practice of humility, the grace of meekness is easily attained, and indeed it seems to be a necessary consequent of it.

How lovely is the character of a man, who can hear himself censured and reviled, without reviling again! Who can sustain repeated affronts, without kindling into flame and fury. Who has learned to bear injuries from his fellow-creatures, and yet withhold himself from meditating revenge! He can sit and hear a strong opposition made to his sentiments, without conceiving an affront: He can bear to be contradicted without resenting: And as he never loves to give offence to any man, so neither is he presently offended. It is only the more peevish and feeble pieces of human nature, that are ready to take offence at trifles, and many times they make their own foolish jealousies a sufficient ground for their indignation.

We cannot expect to pass through the world, and find every thing peaceful and pleasant in it. All men will not be of our mind, nor agree to promote our interest. There are savages in this wilderness, which lies in our way to the heavenly Canaan; and we must sometimes hear them roar against us. Divine courage will enable us to walk onward without fear, and meekness will teach us to pass by without resenting. We should learn to feel many a spark of angry fire falling upon us, from the tongues of others, and yet our hearts should not be like tinder ready to catch the flame, and to return the blaze. The meek christian, at such a season, possesses his soul in patience, as good David did, when Shimei sent his malice and his curses after him: The saint at that time was in an humble temper, and said, *Let Shimei curse.* We should not *render evil for evil*, but according to the sacred direction of scripture, endeavour to *overcome evil with good;* Rom. xii. 21.

Anger is not utterly forbidden to the christian; yet happy is he that has the least occasion for it. In Eph. iv. 26. the apostle gives this rule: *Be ye angry, and sin not.* As if he would have said, when the affairs of life seem to require a just resentment and anger, look upon it as a dangerous moment, and watch against a sinful excess. Let us never give a wild loose to our wrath, but always hold the reins of government with a strong hand, lest it break out into forbidden mischief. When we

give ourselves leave to be offended, let the anger appear to be directed against the sin of the offender, if possible, more than against his person.

Let our anger be well-timed, both as to the season and the length of it. The seasons of it should be very uncommon; a christian should seldom awaken his anger, and the continuance of it must be very short. *Let not the sun go down upon your wrath, nor give place to the devil;* Eph. iv. 26, 27. The long sullen resentment which is practised by some persons, carried on from day to day with a gloomy silence, and now and then venting itself in a spiteful word, or a sly reproach, is by no means becoming the name and spirit of a christian. This is *giving place to the devil*, and making room for him to lodge in our hearts. This is as much contrary to meekness, as a short and sudden fury is, and perhaps carries in it a guilt more aggravated in the sight of God.

Yet neither should our anger indulge itself in loud and noisy practises, nor fill the house with a brawling sound. *It is better to dwell in a corner of the house-top, than to cohabit in a palace with such a brawling companion of life;* Prov. xxi. 9. And the wise man has repeated it again in the xxv. chapter, as a matter worthy of a double notice. St. Paul forbids this practice to the Ephesians: *Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice;* Eph. iv. 31.

Nor should our resentments carry us to any cruel practices. The word of God spends its curses upon such sort of anger; Gen. xlix. 7. *Cursed be the wrath of Simeon, for it was fierce, and the anger of Levi, for it was cruel.* You know what mischiefs it hurried them into, even to foul treachery and murder, and the destruction of a whole country. The grace of meekness is an enemy to all these practices, and a happy preservative from them.

V. Patience is a lovely virtue. I am not now speaking of that religious exercise of it, which consists in a humble submission to the providences of God, without repining at his hand, or sending up our murmurs against heaven; but a patient conduct to our fellow-creatures, is the thing which I chiefly design here to recommend.

When some persons stand in need of any of the necessaries or conveniences of life, they must be supplied first, they can brook no delay; let all the world stand by waiting till they are served; and their anger is quickly kindled if their affairs are not dispatched in a moment. They make no allowances for the necessities or conveniences of others; nor for the various accidents that attend human life, which may stop the speed of the

most diligent servant, and constrain him unwillingly to delay his message or his work. But the patient christian considers all things; desires but his share of the attendance of his fellow-creatures, and waits without clamour till the proper season. He makes wise and kind allowances for every incident of life that may give just occasion to a delay; and gains the love of all that are about him by his most engaging carriage.

How lovely is it to see a teacher waiting upon those that are slow of understanding, and taking due time and pains to make the learner conceive what he means, without upbraiding him with his weakness, or reproaching him with the names of stupid and senseless? This is to imitate God, the God of long suffering and patience, *Who giveth wisdom to all that ask, and upbraideth not;* James i. 5. The patient man attends and waits upon those that are slow of speech, and hears an argument fully proposed before he makes his reply. This is an honourable and lovely character; *But he that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him;* Prov. xviii. 13. Perhaps he is utterly mistaken in the objection which his friend was going to make, then he is justly put to the blush for his folly and impatience.

The virtue of patience teaches us to be calm and easy toward our fellow-creatures, while we sustain sharp and continued afflictions from the hand of God. It is the unhappy conduct of some christians, that when the great God puts them under any sore trial or chastisement, they are angry with all their friends around them, and scatter abroad their discontents in the family, and many times make them fall heaviest upon their most intimate friends. If one were to search this matter to the bottom, we should find the spring of it is an impatience at the sovereign hand of God; but because their christianity forbids them to vent their uneasiness at heaven, they divert the stream of their resentment, and make their fellow- creatures feel it: So a piece of unripe fruit pressed with a heavy weight from above, scatters its sour juice on every thing that stands near it, and gives a just emblem of the impatient christian.

But what a lovely sight is it to behold a person burdened with many sorrows, and perhaps his flesh upon him has pain and anguish, while his soul mourns within him; yet his passions are calm, he possesses his spirit in patience, he takes kindly all the relief that his friends attempt to afford him, nor does he give them any grief or uneasiness but what they feel through the force of mere sympathy and compassion? Thus, even in the midst of calamities, he knits the hearts of his friends faster to himself, and lays greater obligations upon their love by so lovely and divine a conduct under the weight of his heavy sorrows.

VI. Love to mankind in the various branches of it, is a most lovely quality, and well becomes a christian.

Should I speak of love in the heart, which ever thinks the best concerning others, and wishes and seeks their welfare and happiness: Should I speak of it as it works on the tongue, and appears in all friendly language, whether the object be present or afar off: Should I describe it as it discovers itself in the hand of assistance and bounty, to relieve the poor and helpless: Each of these would yield sufficient matter for a whole discourse; and this grace would appear lovely in all its forms. It is a pain to my thoughts to omit it here: Methinks I can hardly tell how to let it go without large encomiums: Nor could I prevail with myself to pass it over now with so brief a mention, if I did not design to employ an hour or two on this subject hereafter.

[The Second Part of this Sermon.]

I proceed to shew how the very light of nature recommends every agreeable and obliging character; every lovely quality that is found among mankind; and reason exhorts us to the acquirement and practice of it.

I. Our own interest directs us to it. It is a natural good quality, and a most useful thing to desire the love of others, to seek the favour of our fellow-creatures. It is a very lawful ambition to covet the good-will of those with whom we converse; and to pursue such practices as may procure us a place in their good opinion and friendship. We who are born for society, must naturally desire to stand well with mankind; and that our neighbours should wish our welfare, should treat us with decency, and civility, and love; should assist our interest, and do us good when we stand in need of them: And if so, then the rule of justice obliges us to practise the same towards them, which we desire they should practise towards us. The more we exercise of *humility*, *meekness*, *patience*, *charity*, and *good-will* towards our neighbours, the more reason have we to expect the same returns of a lovely carriage from them. And it is no small advantage in life, for a person to be much beloved. When he falls under sudden distresses, every man is ready to relieve him, when he meets with perplexing difficulties he has the ready assistance of multitudes at his command, because he hath many lovers.

II. it is a most generous character, and the sign of a great and good soul, to delight to please those with whom we converse. It is a lovely sight to behold a person solicitous to make all around about him easy and happy. Such amiable souls as these it is a frequent practice, and a pleasure to them, to contradict, their own natural inclinations, in order to serve the desires, or the interest of their friends. Happy temper! that finds so much satisfaction in this self-denial, that the very virtue loses its name, and it becomes but another sort of self-pleasing. Such persons are in *pain*, when they find their friends hard to be pleased, and they

uffer sometimes too much uneasiness in themselves, because of he perverse humours of those they converse with. This uneainess indeed may arise to a criminal excess, but the spring of it as something amiable. I could wish every soul of us would earn a lovely carriage. For,

III. It makes us resemble God himself. And yet there are ome that will be selfish and churlish, that will practise the furious r the peevish passions, through some reigning principle of pride, r covetousness, impatience, or envy. There are some that deight in vexing their fellow-creatures, and in giving them torment nd pain. Part of these qualities make us a-kin to brutes of the vorser kind, when we take care of none but self, and are regardess of neighbour's welfare. "If self be healthy and rich, easy and honoured, it is no matter though the rest of the world ustain sickness, and poverty, and scandal." Others of these nlovely characters approach nearer to the spirit of the devil, who takes delight in torturing his fellow-creatures, and doing what mischief he can amongst men.

But it is a God-like temper to take a sweet satisfaction in liffusing our goodness, and in pleasing and in serving all that are ear us. *Let us then be followers of God as dear children;* Eph. v. i. He is the original beauty, he is the loveliest and the best of eings. To be good, and to do good, is a divine perfection, and et us remember it is a perfection that may be imitated too. *He causes his sun to rise, and his rain to fall on the just and on the unjust, and fills the hearts* even of the evil as well as the good *with food and gladness,* when he *gives them fruitful seasons;* Acts xiv. 17. Let us not dare then to be rough and quarrelsome, and sullen, and ill-natured, while we profess to be his offspring. Let there be something lovely in our whole temper and conduct, while we pretend to be imitators of the God of love. And does the light of nature furnish us with all these motives for a lovely carriage? then surely the light of scripture enforces them all. The gospel obliges christians to this practice by much stronger arguments, and it lays on us more substantial obligations.

I. The blessed and ever glorious Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, give us in the gospel a divine example of this practice. Has God, the great and glorious God, manifested a lovely conduct in his works of creation, and his ways of providence; how much more glorious a pattern has he set us in the transactions of his redeeming love! What condescension hath he here shewn! What gentleness! what patience and forbearance! what forgiveness! what infinite and endless discoveries of grace has he made in his gospel! *God the Father reconciling the world to himself by Jesus Christ,* has a peculiar sweetness of aspect and most amiable appearance. Here every chris-

tian beholds him such as he revealed himself to Moses, when he caused his *glory to pass before him;* Ex. xxxiv. 6. *The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,* &c. The Son of God stooping down to take flesh and blood upon him, made the most amiable figure in the universe. Even in his glorious and triumphant state in heaven, he is represented by a *lamb that was slain,* an emblem of meekness and innocence. And if ever the blessed Spirit appeared in the shape of any living creature, it was in the *form of a dove,* a lovely and gentle animal. Thus the blessed Trinity conspire to teach us this amiable and divine carriage.

II. The Son of God incarnate has brought a lovely pattern of this practice nearer to us in his whole deportment on earth. I cannot part with the most graceful example of our Lord Jesus Christ with a slight notice. He came into this world partly with a design to become our pattern in every virtue, and in every grace. Let us turn our eyes towards him in all the circumstances and behaviours of life, and he will ever appear, as he is in himself, the *chiefest of ten thousands, and altogether lovely.* Let us take a survey of him under those several particulars, in which an amiable carriage has been described.

Is prudence a lovely virtue? How perfectly wise was the conduct of our Lord! How carefully did he attend to the circumstances of time and place, while he dwelt among mankind! How happily did he suit his conversation to his company! How wisely did he derive his divine discourses from the daily occurrences of life! How admirably did he distribute his benefits according to the various necessities of men! So that the unprejudiced world pronounced concerning him, *He has done all things well.* Shall we be rash and foolish, fickle and imprudent, and live at random in our words and our works, when we have so divine a pattern of prudence before us in the history of the gospel?

Is moderation another lovely character, and a peace-maker an amiable title? Such was our blessed Lord, and such should his followers be. How glorious a sight is it to behold the Son of God coming down from heaven to be a mediator betwixt his offended Father and his offending creatures! to reconcile heaven and earth together, and rather than fail in this attempt, he gladly exposed himself to shame and death, and made a cement of everlasting friendship betwixt God and man with his own blood. Shall we, who are reconciled by such amazing transactions, quarrel with each other for trifles, and form ourselves into parties for rage, and strife, and hatred, and yet profess the name of the great reconciler! Are we not commanded to *follow peace with all men, as far as possible,* with the security of our holiness and peace with

d? And how can we otherwise hope to be the subjects and ourites of the Prince of peace?

Is humility another part of an amiable character! Who was r humble as the Son of God? *The brightness of his Father's ry, and the express image of his person, who emptied himself, ' took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the ness of men, and humbled himself yet lower, even to the death the cross,* and to the dust of the grave; *Phil.* ii. 6—9. There- the Father loved him, and the Father exalted him. This is man, the God-man, who calls us to the practice of this vir- ; *Learn of me,* says he, *for I am meek and lowly, and ye ll find rest for your souls;* Mat. xi. 29. What folly and lness is it for dust and ashes to be proud, when God's own was humble? And he gives us a noble instance to assure us t humility is a lovely quality: When the rich young man in the pel came and kneeled before him to ask his advice, *Jesus ted upon him and loved him;* and would have left it upon record is word, that there was something lovely in a modest and able carriage, even where the saving grace of God was want- : *Mark* x. 21.

Meekness and patience are the next things I mentioned, go to make up the character of a lovely person. But who meek as the Son of God is? What affronts did he endure n while he was inviting sinners in the most affecting language heir own eternal happiness? What shameful mockery did he ain? What loads of malicious and infamous blasphemy? But *n he was reviled, he reviled not again;* 1 Pet. ii. 23. *as a sheep re her shearer is dumb, so opened he not his mouth;* Is. liii. 7. when shall we learn to imitate our blessed Lord, and forbear l forgive as he did.

How was his patience tried to the utmost? And that not only he fruitless and thankless labours of his life among a cruel l insolent race of men, but in the approaches of his bloody th. When the blessed Redeemer lay agonizing in the garden, hung bleeding on the cross, to see him oppressed with the ght of the wrath of God due to our sins, conflicting with the e of devils, forsaken by his friends, and surrounded with the fane insults of barbarous men: What a mournful and moving ctacle! And yet there is something divinely amiable in it, to old him all over calm and patient, and meditating immortal l forgiving love. What unworthy followers are we of the sed Jesus, *the Lamb that was slain,* when upon every occa- we take fire, and break out into an impatient fury?

But if I should enter upon the last instance of a lovely cha- ter, and begin the mention of love, how far beyond all exam- , and beyond all description, is the love of our Lord Jesus!

How tender were the compassions of his heart! How extensive the benevolence of his soul! What melting language of love dropped from his lips hourly! And how were his mortal and immortal powers employed in procuring infinite blessings for sinful men, in distributing them amongst the rebellious! O that we could learn to think, and speak, and act like our blessed Saviour whose life and whose death was a rich and various scene of divine and human love!

III. I might draw further arguments from the examples, and from the writings of the apostles and holy men in the primitive days of christianity; when they were all of one heart and one soul, and did every thing to please and serve their fellow-christians. I would mention the epistles of St. John; what a divine spirit of love breathes in them! But next to our Lord Jesus, I should rather turn your eyes and thoughts to the temper and conduct of St. Paul, the greatest of the apostles, and the nearest to Christ. How did *he please all men, not seeking his own profit, but their salvation, even as Christ pleased not himself*? And he leaves us his own example in subordination to his Lord, *Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ;* Rom. xv. 1—3. and *give none offence, neither to Jew nor Gentile;* 1 Cor. x. 32. Who is there sorrowful among you, and I sympathize not? *Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended,* and I do not share in the pain? 2 *Cor.* xi. 29. I bear and *endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may be saved;* 2 Tim. ii. 10. How lovely was his behaviour in all respects? His epistles are full of it, it shines through every page: His character demands a volume to describe it, all worthy of our imitation and our wonder.

But I must hasten to the last motive derived from christianity, and that is the nature and design of the gospel itself. It is the most lovely of all religions. Wisdom, humility, peace, patience, meekness, moderation, and love, run through every part of the covenant of grace, like so many bright and beautiful colours joined together in the rainbow, that stretches its glory round the lower sky, and seals an ancient and everlasting peace between earth and heaven.

There is therefore the most sovereign and constraining obligation laid upon us christians, to do all things that are lovely, that we may make our holy religion appear like itself, and cause christianity to be beloved of men. Every christian is in some degree entrusted with the honour of Christ, and with the credit and renown of his gospel. Let us be watchful then to take all opportunities, and use all pious methods to make our hope appear glorious, and set the name of Christ in its own amiable light, and to *adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour.*

How dishonourable and shameful a thing is it for a christian to have an unlovely carriage, or to shew any thing in his conduct that is rough and forbidding! What a blemish does it cast upon the gospel which he professes! Let us talk what we will of the sublimer glories of christianity, and profess an acquaintance with the deepest mysteries, yet with all our flaming zeal for the faith, we may become scandals to the gospel, if we abandon the practices of love. The world will judge of our religion by our temper and carriage. We give occasion therefore to the world to upbraid us, *What do you more than others?* If we, who pretend to be christians, who have professed the most lovely of all religions, are guilty of practices unworthy of the sacred name: When they see our carriage as bad as others, they will be ready to cry out, "*What is your beloved more than another beloved?* What are your doctrines better than others, if your practice differs not from others! And are you willing it should be said of you, that you are the occasions of shame and scandal to the name and religion of Christ?

We should do all things that are amiable in the sight of men, that the gospel may have the glory of it: Shall I say, the gospel of Christ deserves it at our hands? If the gospel brings so rich a salvation to us, it is fitting we should bring a great deal of honour to it. How honourable is it to the gospel of Christ, when persons of a rough, crabbed, sour temper, are converted by this gospel, are become christians indeed, and are made all over amiable, and soft, and obliging in their deportments; when they carry it like new creatures, like persons that are changed indeed, that have much of the spirit of love in them, the temper of the gospel, and the temper of heaven! It is this gospel, as I have said before, that turns lions into lambs, and ravens into doves, the most savage creatures into mild and gentle.

While we are thus engaged in the practice of love, we have no need to abandon our zeal for the truth; but we should separate our divine zeal from all our own guilty passions, lest instead of honouring God, we should destroy his children. The servant of the Lord may be bold and stedfast in the defence of the gospel, but he must *be gentle towards all men, ready to teach*, and patient under injuries. *He must not strive* like a hero for victory, but when any *oppose themselves to the truth, he must instruct them in meekness*; 2 Tim. ii. 24. While we are peaceful and harmless, we may be at the same time prudent and wise; our Lord Jesus has joined these two characters; *Mat.* x. 16. And it is a very lovely inscription for a disciple of Christ to wear in all his public and private conversation, *wise as serpents*, and *harmless as doves*. Thus we may guard ourselves from the malice of the world, while we attempt to win them by all the sacred methods of humanity and divine goodness.

HYMN FOR SERMON XXVIII.

Christian Morality, viz. a Lovely Carriage.

O 'tis a lovely thing to see
  A man of prudent heart,
Whose thoughts, and lips and life agree
  To act a useful part.

When envy, strife, and wars begin
  In little angry fools;
Mark how the sons of peace come in,
  And quench the kindling coals.

Their minds are humble, mild and meek,
  Nor let their fury rise;
Nor passion moves their lips to speak,
  Nor pride exalts their eyes.

Their frame is prudence mix'd with love;
  Good works fulfil their day;
They join the serpent with the dove,
  But cast the sting away.

Such was the Saviour of mankind,
  Such pleasures he pursu'd;
His flesh and blood were all refin'd,
  His soul divinely good.

Lord, can these plants of virtue grow
  In such a soil as mine?
Thy grace can form my nature so
  And make my heart like thine.

SERMON XXIX.

Christian Morality, viz. Things of good Report, &c.

ILIP. iv. 8.—Whatsoever things are of good report,—think on these things.

σα ευφημα, &c.

HE value of a good name was so great under the Jewish ensation, that the Spirit of God does not think it beneath care to recommend it to his chosen people, by the mouth of mon, the wisest of men. *It is better* and more worth *than ious ointment*; Eccl. vii. 1. It was counted an ornament entertainment at public feasts, to have rich oils poured upon head; the price of some of them was exceeding great; they refreshment to the natural spirits, and spread a perfume ugh all the company. But a good name is of greater price, a rich ornament to the character of him that possesses it, and considerable influence toward his happiness; so that to use words of Solomon again; Prov. xxii. 1. *It is rather to be n than great riches.*

The blessed apostle of the Gentiles is of the same mind, he recommends to the christian world, the practice of those gs that are of good report, which is the way, whereby a good e is to be obtained. He had just before recommended to us things that are lovely in the eyes of men, and such as will er us well-beloved among our neighbours. Now he invites the practice of those *things that are of good report* in the world, as will procure us reputation, and a good name, where we live, especially among the wise and sober part of mankind. hath some difference in it from the former, though it must ranted, that all things that are lovely, have also a tendency tain a good name.

There are many things in the conduct of life, which do not rectly offer themselves to us, as parts of necessary justice, , or goodness. But yet they are such as bear a good char- r in the world, and they give to the man that practises them, od reputation among his fellow creatures: on the contrary, are several other practices, which is not easy to prove di- y sinful, yet they are of ill report, and they ought not to be

indulged among christians. Among these practices of good report, some are changeable with the times and customs of the country, and they obtain a different character and esteem, according to the age and place wherein we dwell; others always and in all places among sober and wise men, obtain the same character; they have been in all ages and in all nations, esteemed things of good report: The nature of them seems to be unchangeable: And it is this sort of actions only that I shall take notice of. By various particulars this head will be better illustrated and improved, than it can be by any general descriptions.

It is a matter of good report to mind our own business, yet to be of a public spirit, to be regular in our conduct, to keep the best company, to abstain from the utmost bounds of things lawful, and in doubtful matters, to follow the practices of the wisest and the best. As I discourse upon each of these particulars, I shall observe what are those opposite practices of evil report, which we ought to avoid.

I. It is a thing of good report to mind our own business.—The holy apostle requires it; 1 Thess. iii. 11. *That ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business.* One would think there should be no need of study and application in order to be quiet; but some persons are of so turbulent and restless a temper, that they naturally intermeddle with every thing: They had need take pains with themselves to keep themselves quiet, and busy only in their proper work. The word in the Greek φιλοτιμεσθαι signifies that we should be ambitious of quietness and diligence in our calling, for it is a matter of honour and credit. In whatsoever station we are placed, it is industry must gain reputation. There are other great and valuable advantages of it, but I confine myself now to this one, that is a thing of good report among men.

If persons are called to magistracy, let them attend to the work of their superior post. Let them rule and govern with all diligence, and fulfil that office well, with which God has entrusted them. Let them employ themselves much in their proper sphere, and not wear the honourable title in idleness, or bear the sword in vain, which hath been too frequent a practice in this great city, and thereby vice has grown rampant, and reformation of manners hath been shamefully discouraged.

Those who are made ministers of the gospel, let them make it their business to win souls to salvation, to bring in sinners to faith and holiness, and to edify the saints by their exhortations, by their doctrine, by their example. We should be *instant in season, and out of season, reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine;* 2 Tim. iv. 2. *Let him that ministers wait on his ministry: He that teacheth, on teaching; he that*

exhorteth, on exhortation; Rom. xii. 7. Let us not waste our time and our best talents in the pursuit of laborious trifles, in intricate and perplexing controversies, which are less necessary to the life of christianity, or on useless and angry squabbles, which divide and tear the church. Nor let us throw away these thoughts and hours, on pompous ornaments of learning, on critical or polite, studies, or curious and artificial works, which should be devoted to matters of more sacred importance.

If we are engaged in trades, manufactures, or merchandize in the world, let us shew all industry; and honest labour and care, and thus walk with God, *every man in his calling, wherein he is called,* till the providence of God evidently leads him to other work; 1 *Cor.* vii. 25. And thus we may refute the calumnies of those who would seek all occasions to reflect upon us for our stricter profession of religion. There are many encouraging promises given to diligence in the word of God. I shall mention but one at present that agrees with my present subject; *Prov.* xxii. 29. *Seest thou a man diligent in his business, he shall stand before kings, he shall not stand before mean men.* That is, "his good report and his reputation shall grow and increase, that he shall be brought into more honourable company, and to a more exalted station."

If we are servants, let us devote our time and thoughts to the business which our superiors have entrusted us with, and seek their interest with an honest soul. If we are children and scholars, under instruction, let us apply our minds to learn the things we are taught, and attend to the instructions of those who teach us. Every one of us have our proper work, which demands our application to it. There are many enemies to this virtue, many practices inconsistent with the character of diligence, as it is celebrated and recommended in the word of God.

First, Sloth or laziness stands formost in this rank. Surely the powers of our mind and body were never made to be useless. *Go to the ant, thou sluggard,* and learn industry of that little animal. Can we think we were born to be cumberers of the ground, and mere burdens of the earth we dwell on? Let us shake off this stupid and infamous humour, let us rise to an active life, and answer the ends of our creation. And for the same reason it is, that there ought to be a restraint put upon an excess of sleep, and slumber. You know the character of the drowsy wretch, that turns from side to side *upon his bed, as a heavy door upon its hinges;* and *the sluggard,* who with folded hands sits still and lets the weeds grow over his corn; but these men shall be *clothed with rags;* Prov. xxi. 14.

Secondly, Luxury and an intemperate love of pleasure, is another enemy to diligence in our callings. It is an odious character that is given to the inhabitants of Crete by one of their own poets; and the Spirit of God confirms the truth of it; *Titus* i. 12. *The Cretans are evil beasts, slow bellies;* so shamefully engaged in gluttony and the luxury of the palate, that they render themselves heavy, stupid, and unfit for business; A lazy generation of men, that have much more inclination to eat and drink, and live like brutes, than to employ themselves in any honest labour, that is worthy of human nature, or becomes a man.

Under the same reproof I may justly bring an excessive indulgence of sports or recreations, beyond what is necessary for the refreshment of nature, and the recruit of our spirits, in order to fulfil duty with more diligence: This was intimated in a former discourse. It is but a character of ill report, when a man is too often found in the place of sports and unnecessary diversions, while he ought to be in his shop, or in other proper business of his life. *Prov.* xxi. 27. " *He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man*; *and he that loves wine and oil*, feastings and entertainments, *he shall not be rich.*

Thirdly, A tattling humour, excessive talking, and an idle inquisitive impertinence, are great enemies also to that industry, that is recommended to us. Solomon assures us, that though there is *profit in all labour*, yet *the talk of the lips, tendeth only to penury*; Prov. xiv. 23. And he redoubles it upon our ears, that a *prating fool shall fall:* Prov. x. 8—10. There are some persons that love to talk of any thing, or every thing, besides their own business; like foolish children that turn every page of their books, and flutter a little about every part of them, besides where their lesson is. Every moving feather is ready to seize the fancy of these triflers, this fickle and talkative race of men: They are but taller children. Every little story entertains their idle inclination, and gives them fresh employment to tell it over again. They had rather do any thing than the duty of the present hour; they spend their time like the *inhabitants of Athens*, in *little else but hearing or telling some new thing.*

Some of these persons are ready to intermingle themselves with every man's concernments, uncalled and undesired: They search into the secrets of families, in order to gratify a wicked humour, to spread abroad and publish some private scandal. *They creep into houses*, to make mischief there, and by *tattling* and repeating matters of contest, *they separate very friends*, and raise angry quarrels in peaceful families; *Prov.* xvii. 9. Such persons seem to deserve the public censure of the magistrate, in the opinion of the apostle Peter; 1 *Peter* iv. 15. *But let none*

of you, that are christians, *suffer as an evil-doer, or as a busy body in other men's matters.* He himself once fell under the censure of Christ our Lord, for this inquisitive and needless curiosity. *John* xxi. 21, 22. When St. Peter had received a prophecy from his master concerning his own martyrdom, he had also an express notice what his own business was, *viz.* to *follow* his master. But Peter had a mind to know what should become of John too; "Lord, says he, and *what shall this man do or suffer? What if I will*, says our blessed Lord, *that he tarry till I come again? What is that to thee?* Is that thy business, Peter, to know what shall befal John? Mind thy own duty, and *follow thou me.* A wise and divine rebuke from our risen Saviour! After this, St. Peter well knew how to censure such impertinence, and to reprove *busy-bodies.*

Of the same mind is the apostle Paul. He advises women how to behave themselves, that they may not fall under this charge. *Let them guide the house*, says he, and employ themselves in domestic affairs: for if they neglect this work, *they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also, and busy-bodies, speaking things which they ought not*; gathering up matter for slander of their neighbours at their next visit, where every one is ashamed to be silent, and therefore each is ready to furnish the company with their share. But this practice, in the opinion of the sacred writer furnishes the adversary with daily occasion to slander christianity, and to *speak reproachfully* of the gospel, and it is a thing of *very ill fame*; 1 Tim. v. 13, 14.

II. A public spirit is another thing of good report. Though christians must be diligent in their business, yet they should not confine all their cares within the narrow circle of self, but have a hearty solicitude for the welfare of the nation in which they dwell, for the neighbours among whom they inhabit, for the church of Christ in the world, and extend their concern to the happiness of mankind: The apostle directs Timothy to *make supplications, prayers, and intercessions for all men*, and to take such a satisfaction in the mercies they receive, as to *give thanks* to God upon their account; 1 Tim. ii. 1. He exhorts the Ephesians to *prayer and supplication for all the saints*; Eph. vi. 18. And what he taught, he also practised in an eminent and glorious manner; *the care of all the churches came daily upon him:* And you find him in the beginning of his epistles lifting up his petitions and his praises to heaven continually for the churches to whom he writes.

We should rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep, and share with our fellow-christians in their joys and

their sorrows, that we may thereby double their joys, and lighten the weight of their sorrows by a blessed sympathy. Rom. xii. 15. We should *bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ*; Gal. vi. 2. And in 1 Cor. x. 24. he saith, "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth, or welfare;" that is, "Let no man be so wholly swallowed up in his own profit and peace, as utterly to neglect the peace and profit of his neighbour." But though this be so honourable and becoming a practice, yet it has ever been too much neglected, even among the professors of the gospel; for St. Paul tells the Philippians, that Timothy was a singular instance of this good quality; Phil. ii. 20, 21. *I have no man like minded, who will naturally care for your state; for all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.*

Some may be ready to raise an objection here, and say, "How is this consistent with the former character and practice which I recommended, namely, that every man mind his own business?"

I grant that this ought generally to be our first care, that we fulfil the duties of our own particular station well, and see to it, that ourselves and our household be supported: This is usually the loudest call of providence, for he that provides not for those of his own house, when it is in his power, does not answer the demands of christianity, but is worse than an infidel, or one that has denied the faith; 1 Tim. v. 8. But there are many sacred and civil services may be done for the neighbourhood, the church, and the nation, without any culpable hinderance to our own affairs. So much time may be easily redeemed from sloth and slumber, from useless and impertinent conversation, as the public may call for at our hands. And when there is a day of distress or trouble come upon our friends, upon the land wherein we dwell, or the churches of Christ in the world, when virtue and religion are in sinking circumstances, we are called somtimes to lay out a larger part of our time and strength, our interest and our substance, for the welfare of the public, which otherwise perhaps might be due to ourselves, and our own family. In such cases as these, christian prudence must direct us how to distinguish wisely, and determine how far this self-denial is to be exercised, in order to promote the happiness of mankind, and the public honour of Christ. This is a thing of good report in the church and in the world, and it will turn to our honour in the day of the Lord.

But let no man deceive himself, and vainly imagine that he may lay claim to the honour of a public spirit, because he spends half his days in places of public resort, and in fruitless enquiries and chatterings about the affairs of government, and the business

the state; perhaps he extends his care also to Muscovy and ersia, as well as Great Britain, while the care of his shop is a tle thing with him, the business of his study or counting-house forgotten, and his family complains of woeful neglect: Nor e public affairs mended by all his impertinence.

[If this sermon be too long, it is best divided here.]

III. Regularity in the conduct of our affairs is a becoming aracter, and will gain us a good name amongst men. As ere are many and various duties that belong to the natural, the vil, and the religious life; it is a piece of eminent wisdom to point proper seasons and rules for the performance of them; r should we think it beneath us, as far as possible, to govern rselves by those rules, and keep to our own appointed seasons; herwise all our affairs will be ready to run into confusion, one ty will be apt to intrench upon another, and some of the duties life or godliness will be neglected, or quite forsaken, under a etence of want of time.

One thing that intrenches upon the regular hours and orders life, is a trifling and dilatory temper, putting off necessary siness, whether it be work or devotion, till the last moment; d then, if the least accident intervenes, we have not left ourlves sufficient time to perform it. These are the persons who e frequently found in a hurry and confusion, because they have glected to do the proper work in the proper season. Their siness is always done in haste, and often unfinished. These e they who keep no appointments, who are seldom true to their ur, who make their friends wait for them upon all occasions, o often create uneasiness to all the company, and put a whole mily out of order. What an unbecoming behaviour is this! hat an ill aspect it bears! especially if these delayers are in y degree inferior, or the younger parts of a house. And yet might easily be prevented, by taking the first opportunity for ery business. O it is an excellent, a golden rule, "Never leave at till to-morrow, which may be done to-day, nor trust the siness of this hour to the care of the next," for the next is not ine.

When servants are of this dilatory and trifling humour, they ste their master's time perpetually, and put their superiors to any inconveniences. They prevent one another's business as ll as neglect their own. You would wonder how they could end three or four hours in a common errand, and make a family it half a day for a message, that might be dispatched in half an ur. They cannot keep their eyes or their ears from attending every object they meet; their endless curiosity of enquiry, d their irresistible inclination to talk of every thing that does t concern them, is an everlasting hinderance to their proper

work. This active sort of idleness is much harder to be cured than that of the slow and stupid kind; and you see it belongs to the poor as well as the rich; though it is a matter of diareputation and infamy to both.

Persons of this unhappy conduct, whether of high or low degree, are in great danger of trifling in the most sacred and divine concernments, as well as in common life. They sometimes manage their spiritual and immortal affairs in the same dilatory manner, but with more dreadful and fatal consequence. They put off repentance from day to day, and delay their solemn transactions with God, till sickness seizes them, or till death approaches: Then what hurry of spirit! What dreadful confusion of soul! What tumults and terrors overwhelm them! And it is well if the matters of their salvation be not unfinished at the last hour, and themselves made miserable to all eternity, because they trifled away life and time.

A second enemy to this regular conduct of life, and which indeed is derived from the former, is this, an inversion of the order of nature, and a change of the seasons which God hath appointed for business and rest. I confess this is not now-a-days a matter of ill report in itself, however contrary it be to the laws of nature and the creation: But it is attended with many irregularities, and sometimes with infamous practices too: And therefore I would spend one page to give it an ill name; and to bring it into just discredit.

God has made every thing beautiful in its season; Eccl. iii. 11. *The sun ariseth;—and man goeth forth to his work until the evening*; Ps. civ. 22, 23. It is more natural and healthful to pursue the concerns of life, as much as possible by day-light. Midnight studies are prejudicial to nature: A painful experience calls me to repent of the faults of my younger years, and there are many before me have had the same call to repentance. Wearing out the lightsome hours in sleep, is an unnatural waste of sun-beams. There is no light so friendly to animal nature as that of the sun. Midnight assemblies, festivals, and entertainments, exhaust the spirits, and make a needless profusion of the necessaries of life: They carry a very ill appearance with them, even where no wickedness is indulged, they are practices of evil report, and deserve censure and shame.

It is no honour to our whole nation, that we have learned the fashion of doing nothing in the morning; among persons of mode the day often begins at noon: The hours of business are grown much later among us than our forefathers could bear. They knew the worth of day-light. In some things indeed we are bound to comply with custom, or we must forsake the world: for a few can never stem the general tide, or reform a degenerate

e: And there are some few trades and employments which mand labour at night. But in our general conduct we should deavour to act more agreeably to the laws of creation and nare, and to reduce families to a little better order, wheresover we ve power and influence. Surely it can be no great hardip for any persons in health to begin their duty with the rising n, for almost half the year. We should not think it sufficient get up a little before noon, nor should we turn the morning of od and nature into midnight, nor make the decline of the sun rve for our morning work.

I would not be thought in this page to reflect upon the weak, e sickly, and the aged parts of mankind, whose nature may reire longer sleep, and a larger degree of rest to recruit their irits: Nor do I accuse those unhealthy persons, who can get no imber till the night is half spent, and are thereby constrained, erely for the sake of health, to let their bed intrench upon so any hours of day-light: Yet I persuade myself, that if these st would but bear the inconveniences they complain of for a eek or two, if they would break off their morning-slumber rly, and early betake themselves to rest, nature would ickly learn a better habit, the reformation would soon grow sy: And perhaps this might advance their health in a sensible anner, beyond all their old indulgences, or their present expecions.

An excessive love of company, an affectation of going abroad, delight in wine and strong drink, are the third sort of enemies that regularity and order which I am now recommending. ich practices are censured in the word of God; I have called e prophet Isaiah, in a former discourse, to witness against the unkard, but I must ask leave to cite the same text again, ainst the wasters of time in taverns, or meaner drinking-houses. *o to them that go to their cups in a morning*: This throws all e business of the day out of order; and sometimes they are mpted to continue until night, or at least they return thither ain and stay till wine inflames them: then all the follies of life ay their parts; but they forget religion, and *regard not the ork, nor the worship of the Lord*; Is. v. 11, 12. How often has been found, that the religion of the closet, as well as that of e family, hath been shortened and omitted, and by degrees rust out of doors, and forgotten, for want of shaking off ery impediment, and confining ourselves to proper seasons. e intend to fulfil our duties, but we intend it at random, without eping any time for it: And thus some households, that would called christians, live without God in the world. They that *rry long at wine*, or in any needless company, and lengthen t the hours of their needless absence from home, may count

themselves guilty of the several disorders that are committed in the family; which would be rectified, or entirely prevented by the presence of the master.

I confess sometimes necessary business detains a person beyond his usual and appointed hour: there must also be some allowances made for the unhappy engagements which may attend some particular callings in the world. Our own consciences must be the final judges in this case: But let us be faithful and honest, and frequently make an enquiry, whether our conduct be regular or no: and whether it be the necessity of affairs that intrenches upon the seasons of duty, or whether it be a careless indifference of spirit. Good orders in a household, and regular hours for all the duties and enjoyments of life, give beauty and ornament to life itself: Like a musical instrument, where every string is wound up to strike its proper note, and the skilful musician keeps his time, how does it entertain the ear with innocent pleasure, and refresh the heart, when practised at proper seasons? Such a family appears like a Bethel, a house of God, and the Lord himself delights to dwell in it. O may it be my lot and portion always to inhabit in such a tabernacle, till I lay down this body in the dust, and my soul arises to the well-ordered family of heaven!

IV. Sorting ourselves with the best company is another beautiful part of christian conduct, and procures a good report. By the best of company, I do not intend the greatest or the richest, nor the most ingenious and witty; for there are some of these that are vain and vile enough; but the best in my esteem, are those who are most virtuous, most pious, most knowing and wise, or those that are seeking after virtue, piety, and wisdom. Thus by conversation with the one, we may be always doing good, and with the other we may be always receiving some good. *He that walketh with wise men, shall grow yet wiser, but the companion of fools shall be destroyed*; Prov. xiii. 20. *Be not deceived, God is not mocked, evil communications corrupt good manners.* A heathenish poet, and an inspired apostle agree in these words; 1 Cor. xv. 33. If we are engaged much in converse with those that are light, and frothy, and vain, we shall gain the same levity of temper. If we talk much with the profane, we shall be tempted now and then to a profane expression too. "Can a man touch pitch, and not be defiled!" Can a man pass through the flames, and his clothes not be singed? Neither can those that walk frequently and delightfully amongst light, vain, intemperate persons, escape being defiled by them.

It is true, the apostle tells us, if we would utterly seclude ourselves from all manner of converse with persons of ill character, we must abandon society, and almost *go out of the world*;

1 Cor. v. 10. But the meaning of the apostle, when he bids us avoid evil companions is, as much as possible, to shun their company; see therefore that it is a necessary call of providence leads you amongst them; otherwise abstain. Those who give themselves up to be entertained by every one that will entertain them, those who will walk with every companion, and will herd with every drove, they are in danger of being corrupted with any vice, and of learning every ill principle. But if through the grace of God, we should escape the infection, of error or sin, yet we shall loose our good name by keeping ill company. A delight in base and worthless companions, will make the world judge that we are like them: Whereas we shall gain a part of the good character of our associates and acquaintance, and derive honour from them, if we are so happy as to have friendship and intimacy with persons of piety, learning and virtue. May these be the friends of my choice, and my companions for ever!

V. Abstinence from the utmost bounds of things lawful, is another practice of good report amongst men. It is but a narrow line in many cases, that divides, between a lawful and a sinful practice; and if we will venture, as near as possible to the very borders of what we think lawful, we shew too great an inclination to the bordering iniquity, and we shall often be in danger of treading on forbidden ground. If we indulge the love of pleasure, or give an unguarded loose to any unlawful passion, we shall find it difficult to with-hold the violence of corrupt nature from transgressing the lawful bounds. If a wild horse be indulged in his career, it is well if he does not break the reins, and fling the rider. It is a foolish fancy to walk upon the edge of a precipice, unless we could infallibly secure our head from giddiness, or our feet from stumbling. It is much safer therefore to keep a proper distance from fatal danger. The world will give us but an ill character, and say very justly concerning us, that we are not much afraid of vice, if we dare rashly venture into temptation.

It is the advice of the Holy Spirit, and St. Paul to the christian converts, *Abstain from all appearance of evil*; 1 Thess. v. 22. And the Apostle Jude requires us to *hate even the garments that are spotted by the flesh*; Jude, verse 23. Every thing that looks like guilt should forbid our approach; we should chuse to stand afar off, and withhold our desires, lest we defile our consciences, and bring a blemish upon our character. What an honour is it to any man, when it is said concerning him, "He has a tender soul, and a conscience that will not stretch, to the length of the loose customs and fashions of the times: he dares not allow himself all the liberties that are innocent and lawful, lest he should wound his own spirit, and his good name, by venturing

too near to the borders of iniquity." Let such a temper be our constant guard and ornament.

VI. Following the common practices of the saints in doubtful matters, is another thing of good report, and ought to be so among those that profess the name of Christ? Whether it be in our trade and business, in our apparel, or our visits, in our forms of address to our superiors, or common methods of conversation and civility, of recreation, or entertainment, let the general customs of the saints of the purest ages, or the customs of the purest churches, and the best christians in our own age, be a direction to our practice. *Ask for the good old way*, says the prophet Jeremy, and if we know not what part to chuse, let us *go by the footsteps of the flock* of Christ. Enquire what the followers of our Lord have done in past ages, and what the wisest and best of them do in our own age, and this will give us a considerable assistance to determine what ought to be our practice.

In 1 Cor. xi. 16. the apostle Paul seems to refer to this general head, for our determination in doubtful matters. When he had been proposing the law of nature, or the order of creation, to direct the man and the woman what sort of covering they ought to wear, *viz. that a woman ought not to be uncovered, and that a man should not wear long hair*, that is, should not nourish his hair to make it grow long, as women, nor manage it with a nice and effeminate curiosity, he concludes with this sentence, *If any man seem to be contentious*, that is, if any man be not contented with the arguments I have brought, but will carry on contention and dispute, let him remember this decisive argument, that *we have no such custom, nor the churches of God*; we the preachers of the gospel, and the apostles of Christ, have neither found nor approved such sort of customs among the christians where we have lived, nor are they practised in any of the churches of God, which we have heard of.

I will readily allow, that the strict professors of religion in some particular ages of the church, may have generally indulged either some unreasonable scruples, or some unreasonable liberties. There are some practices of evident and undoubted lawfulness, which have been forbidden in severe and dreadful language by some or other of our religious ancestors; such as wearing borrowed hair, or suffering our own to reach the shoulders; using any thing that borders upon lot or chance, except in matters of sacred or solemn concernment: wishing a friend's health when we drink; practising any part of our civil calling after sun-set on Saturdays, or even calling the months, or the days of the week by names borrowed from the heathens, such as Monday or Tuesday; January, or February: Yet in such cases as these, had I lived amongst them, I would have conformed to their customs,

and have given no offence; but I would have taken every proper occasion to shew that these were unnecessary scruples.

This was the conduct of St. Paul, in the controversy about eating meats offered to idols; 1 Cor. viii. 8. *Meat commendeth us not to God; for neither if we eat, are we the better; neither if we eat not, are we the worse.* There he declares how needless these scruples were; and 1 Cor. x. 25. to shew that christian liberty, where no scrupulous person was present and opposed it, he bids them, *eat whatsoever is sold in the shambles, asking no questions for conscience-sake.* But in both these places he cautions them against offending the weaker brethren, and shews also how afraid he was of giving offence, or acting in their presence contrary to their practices, even though they were built on needless scruples. Verse 13. *I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, if it make my brother to offend;* that is, if it tempt him to grow bold, and venture upon the same food against his conscience. And the apostle practised this self-denial, lest he should *sin against his weak brother*, lest he should *grieve him* by his *uncharitable* licence; as Rom. xiv. 15. This holy caution and tenderness of offending the weak, was the constant practice of that blessed saint, who had more knowledge than all of us, but he had more condescension and self-denial too. O that we might all make him our pattern, and practise the charity we preach so loudly, and profess with such a modern assurance!

There are other practices which might be comprised under this general character, and recommended as *things of good report.* But I must not draw such discourses out to a tiresome length, which perhaps may create but too much pain and uneasiness, by the very sense and subject of which they treat. Yet certainly it is a part of our duty and our interest to know, and meditate, and practise those things that may gain us a good name and reputation in the world, and may brighten our character among the churches of Christ; and to avoid every thing that would blemish our honour, or sink our esteem among wise and good men. What arguments may be drawn from the light of nature to enforce this exhortation, or what more powerful motives are derived from the gospel, to awaken and excite us to the practice of all that is honourable, shall be considered in the next discourse, when I treat of the matters of virtue and praise, which are recommended in the last words of my text.

HYMN FOR SERMON XXIX.

Christian Morality, viz. Things of Good Report.

IS it a thing of good report,
To squander life and time away?
To cut the hours of duty short,
While toys and follies waste the day!

To ask and prattle all affairs,
And mind all business but our own?
To live at random void of cares,
While all things to confusion run?

Doth this become the christian name,
To venture near the tempter's door?
To sort with men of evil fame,
And yet presume to stand secure?

Am I my own sufficient guard,
While I expose my soul to shame?
Can the short joys of sin reward
The lasting blemish of my name?

O may it be my constant choice
To walk with men of grace below,
'Till I arrive where heavenly joys,
And never-fading honours grow?

SERMON XXX.

ristian Morality, viz. *Courage and Honour; or Virtue and Praise.*

ILIP. iv. 8.——If there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

Ει τις αρετη και ει τις επαινος, &c.

IRTUE is an honourable and extensive name: It is used by ral writers to include all the duties we owe to *ourselves*, or our *low-creatures*; such as *sobriety, temperance, faithfulness, justice, idence, goodness*, and *mercy*; and the sense of it is sometimes etched so far, as to comprehend also the duties of religion ich we owe to *God*. But let us take notice, that the first and ginal signification of the word both in the Greek and Latin ıgues is much more limited, and it means only *power* or *cou-ge*. The Greek word αρετη, used here by the apostle, is de-ed from Αρης, the name of Mars, or the heathen god of war: d doubtless the most ancient meaning of it among the *Greek iters* was *warlike valour*, though in time the *philosophers* en-ged the sense of it to include every moral excellency.

The several places in the New Testament where the word used, have chief reference to some work or glorious power ıen it is applied to God, or courage when it refers to men. I ah I could stay here to explain them all, but I must mention e of them, *viz.* 2 *Peter* i. 5. *Add to your faith virtue, to virtue owledge, to knowledge temperance*, &c. Virtue is to be added faith, that is, next to your belief of the gospel, get courage to ofess what you believe: Is it not to be supposed, that in this ıce virtue can signify the whole of morality, because the parti-lar virtues of temperance, patience, and charity are named also: ıd therefore this must signify some part of morality distinct ›m the rest, *viz.* a strength or fortitude of soul.

And for the same reason the word virtue in my text cannot ɡnify the whole system of moral duties because St. Paul in the me verse had been recommending truth, justice, and purity or mperance, which are so many pieces of morality; and it is not asonable to imagine that he brings in a general name that com-

prehends them all in the midst of so many particulars, which is contrary to the use of all writers, and to his own custom too. I confess if he had said, *if there be any other virtue*, as he does in the like case; *Rom.* xiii. 9. when he had omitted any particular, we might then have understood virtue in the general sense; but now it is evident, that he means a particular excellency; distinct from those before-mentioned; and the word itself requires us to understand a brave, bold, and generous spirit and practice. He recommends to them a great and excellent behaviour, wherein their holy courage may appear, when the call of providence gives a just occasion.

Courage is a virtue which stands in opposition both to fear and shame; and it guards the mind of man from the evil influence of both those passions. The man of courage has not such a feeling fondness for his flesh nor his estate, as to be afraid to profess his sentiments, or to fulfil his duty at every call of providence, though his estate may suffer damage by it, or his flesh be exposed to pain: Nor has he such a tenderness for his honour, as to secure it with the loss of his innocence. He is not ashamed to appear for virtue in an age of vice and scandal: He stands up boldly for the honour of his God, and ventures a thousand perils rather than wound his conscience, or betray his trust: He dares profess and practise temperance among an herd of drunkards, and purity in the midst of the lewd and unclean: The man of courage can despise the threatenings of the great, and the scoffs of the witty, conscious of his own integrity and truth. He can face and oppose the world with all its terrors; and travel onwards in the paths of piety without fear. *The righteous man is as bold as a lion;* Prov. xxviii. 1.

Now it is the apostle's advice to the Philippian converts, that whensoever there is any just occasion given to exert their fortitude, whether it be in the defence of the rights of mankind, and the liberties of their country, or in vindication of the cause of God or virtue, let the christian take those opportunities to speak his mind, and shew his courage; let him make it appear that the meek of the earth may sometimes resist the mighty oppressors, that the followers of the Lamb dare to oppose the wild beasts of the age, and are ready to sacrifice all that human nature calls dear for the service of God, or the welfare of their fellow-creatures.

The heathen world may derive some arguments from the light of reason, and some perhaps from more corrupt and selfish principles, to awaken their valour, and to raise heroes amongst them: But there is nothing among all the writings of the philosophers, or the examples of their real or their fabled heroes, that can raise and support so illustrious and divine a courage, as the

iples and the patterns with which the gospel of Christ has ished us; whether we look to Jesus, the founder of our re-n, the Son of God in our nature, or to his apostles, or to the itive martyrs, among whom some of the weaker sex and the ker age, have outshone the glory, and darkened the lustre of he great men of heathenism.

What blessed views hath the gospel given us of heaven and e happiness, to animate our zeal, and to engage us to the est efforts of goodness! What promises of almighty power sist us in our sacred attempts, and to bear up our spirits! at rich and infallible assurances have we in the word of God pport our highest expectations, that if *we are faithful to the h, we shall receive a crown of life!* Rev. ii. 10. And Jesus forerunner hath already taken possession of all these prizes glories to reward the conquerors.

Shall we sink and despond at any dark appearances? Shall spirits fail us in the midst of duty, when we have so many e motives to valour and holy fortitude? Methinks there ld be nothing too hard for a christian to undertake or suffer, n God and providence call him to it. I confess that flesh and d are frail and feeble: Animal nature overwhelms the soul its shudderings, and forbids the execution of the bravest pur-s. It is only grace, divine grace, that can strengthen the bling christian, and make him venture through dangers and h in the way to the heavenly crown. It is this gives power e promises, and makes the saint believe the performance. this sets heaven before his eyes, and gives it such an attrac-influence, such a sovereign conquest over all his fears; it even es the sinews of nature, and exalts the spirits to despise dan-and pain. What wonders of holy fortitude might a chris-perform, if the eye of his faith were kept always open, and y fixed on those bright and everlasting invisibles?

But I shall enlarge no farther on this argument of christian age, and I am the more inclined to dismiss this subject at ent, having reserved some discourses on it for another season*.

I proceed therefore to the last exhortation in my text, *If be any praise*, any actions that deserve honour amongst men, *on these things*, engage yourselves in the practice, and ob-the honour. The praise which the apostle here recommends, be described as Cicero, the famous Roman orator, describes ; it is, "The concurrent and unanimous commendation of men, or the general voice of wise and uncorrupted judges, erning any eminent practice of virtue."

* See the two following sermons.

The holy apostle had just before recommended things of good report, and now he exhorts them to the practice of laudable actions or things that merit praise. The difference between these two is this: a good report signifies a clear and unblemished character, fair reputation among men, a good name among those with whom our daily acquaintance lies, and our civil conversation and business. But praise implies a considerable degree of applause or honour, obtained by some eminent actions, or some extraordinary instances of wisdom, courage, or goodness. A man that has never attained to any great degree of excellence above his neighbours, may yet have a fair reputation in the world: But the word praise seems to imply a great and honourable name, as well as a good one.

I shall mention but two general instances, wherein we may suppose the apostle recommends to us the practice of those things that are laudable: One is, an extraordinary conduct in common affairs; the other is an improvement of the seasons, or occasions of extraordinary virtue.

I. It is a thing praise-worthy to labour after an extraordinary conduct and uncommon excellence in our common affairs of life, to excel all others in the things that relate to our station in the world. Let each of us search and enquire, what is it within our reach that shines brightest among men, and then pursue it with vigour.

If a person, who professes religion in the strictest manner, and in the purest forms, be made a magistrate or public officer, let him do something extraordinary for the public welfare, if it be possible, and merit the public thanks and praise of the community. So if a man be called to the ministry of the gospel, let him imitate the blessed apostle in zeal for Christ; as in 1 Cor. xv. 10. *I laboured more—than they all.* Let there be no bounds to our desires of excellence, and our zeal for the salvation of men. *Covet earnestly the best gifts*, says the apostle; 1 *Cor.* xii. 31. and animate them with the noblest graces. There is a holy emulation wherein we may vie with one another, and each of us get as near perfection as possible. This is praise-worthy. I told you before, that magistrates or ministers must be diligent in their work to gain a good report, but they must double that diligence to obtain special praise.

So in the most common employments of life, and the management of daily affairs abroad or at home, we should aspire to be patterns of every thing that is good and laudable, that we may all be able to say as St. Paul, *Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ:* 1 Cor. xi. 1. Am I a master? Let me have a holy ambition to be the best of masters, and by an excellent conduct constrain all my servants to praise and love me; except such

lgar and brutal souls that no kindness can engage, no merit n oblige, and no virtue can influence. Am I a servant? Let r zeal for my master's interest exceed all my fellows, and my thfulness and diligence in every duty extort honour even from ose who envy me, and deserve the esteem and love of those that e above me. If I am an artificer, and God hath given me any perior talents or capacities, I should not employ those superior ents in trifles, but use them to some most valuable purposes, the benefit of mankind, beyond what former ages have known. should promote useful knowledge, if I am a philosopher, and ry it on farther than my fathers have done. These are some tances wherein we may perform actions of praise that are bening a man or a christian.

II. It is a thing praise-worthy to improve all the seasons d occasions of extraordinary virtue, to seize on those special portunities which providence now and then may give us to ert uncommon degrees of wisdom or mercy, activity or couge.

We are always required to be faithful to our rulers, and kind our neighbours and friends: But when our king or our coun- is in some imminent danger, when some threatening mischief ngs over a family, or a city, when our friend or brother, or even tranger, is in immediate peril of life, there may be a glorious asion for some great and generous exercise of loyalty, fortile, compassion, or love, to save a friend or a stranger, a prince a nation. All the world shall agree to praise the man who perms that noble service.

We are bound always to be liberal, and to give to the poor, t sometimes we have an opportunity to exercise that grace of erality in a more ample and generous manner, so as to deserve d obtain an honourable name: As when a great number of dissed wretches come to the city or place where we dwell, or en some general calamity involves all our poor neighbours, and luces them to great straits, then we should exercise bounty ond the common measure: Thus a christian shall have the nour of relieving the poor more than heathens do, or those who ke no profession of godliness.

So in the practice of charity and forgiveness, Jesus our rd requires us to forgive our enemies, and to do good to those t hate, and abuse, and persecute us: But when it lies in our ver to do a most considerable service to a person that has done the highest injury, then there is a special providence calling us perform a glorious action of praise. Such was the character that great and good man Archbishop Cranmer, of whom it is l, if any man had done him an injury, he would ever afterward his friend.

In short, whensoever an occasion arises to give an eminent and glorious proof of generosity or compassion, of gratitude or goodness, of zeal for God, or love to men, it is the apostle's advice, that a christian should seize the golden hour, and not suffer a heathen to prevent or exceed him. And among christians, let those who profess the severest virtue, and the purest methods of christianity be the persons who seize most of these opportunities to perform actions worthy of praise. But when there is any thing mean and base, scandalous and sordid appears in the world, as it never should be said that a christian has done it, so neither would I ever have such a scandal fall upon any person who professes the strictest forms of godliness.

I come in the next place to consider, what arguments may be drawn from the light of reason, to excite us to actions of good report, and such as are worthy of special praises; for in the foregoing discourse I told you, that I should join the arguments or motives together, which belong to both these exhortations.

I. If a person practises things of good report, and acquires to himself reputation and praise amongst men, he does himself and his family a considerable kindness by it. If a man has not a good name, he can neither expect to be entertained in any society with pleasure, nor to receive any special benefits from the world. A person of ill report is rather hated than beloved, he is shunned and avoided rather than desired, and his neighbours will treat him with neglect rather than assistance. His very name is mentioned with disgrace instead of praise. Whereas, on the other hand, a man whose excellent character has deserved a good report and honour among his fellow-citizens, has every one ready to invite him to their company, and willing to reach out to him their friendly hand when he is fallen into danger or distress.

Besides, such a person lays up honour for his household, and provides the friendship of mankind for the help of his family in generations yet to come. It is confessed indeed, that the spirit of the world has too much baseness in it, and too great a neglect of real merit: Yet when a man has deserved exceeding well of his country, and acquired any special degrees of praise or renown amongst them, the world is not yet quite so brutal and degenerate, but that it has given many instances of bounty and goodness to the posterity of a man of honour. *His name shall be had in everlasting remembrance, and the generation of the upright shall be blessed.* Ps. cxii. 2, 6.

II. A man that has obtained a good report and honour in the world, by many reputable actions, is capable of much greater service both to God and his fellow-creatures. If we have gained

esteem and reputation among men, they will be more ready to hearken to our counsel, and comply with our advice. We shall have more influence on mankind, both to promote the honour of God and the benefit of men. A word that we speak, will make deeper impression, and be attended with greater success. A word or a look of Cato among the Romans, would do more to restrain vice, and to shame the vicious, than the frown of an emperor.

III. There is so much real and inward satisfaction arises from a good character, obtained by a life of virtue and piety, that a man who knows the pleasure of it, would not renounce the practices which may attain it. I confess it is a more important matter to secure a good conscience than a good name, and to obtain praise in the sight of God, than in the lips of men: But where both these are joined together by the favour of divine providence, our virtue and piety has a larger reward, and our natures are so framed and composed, that we cannot help taking some satisfaction in it. Prov. xv. 30. *A good report makes the bones fat;* that is, as one expresses it, it revives the heart to such a degree, as renders the body more healthful and vigorous.

Methinks those persons have something very degenerate in them, and their conduct is a little unnatural who seem to have lost the very desire of a good name or reputation. I cannot but wonder to hear a person boast of his scorn and contempt of it in such language as this; "I will pursue my own designs, I will gratify and please myself, and I care not what the world says of me." Surely if such language did become a christian, the scripture would not be so solicitous to recommend a good name and things of good report.

This naturally leads me to consider, what influence christianity has to excite us to the practice of reputable actions and such as deserve honour amongst men.

Here we may first take notice, how often the scripture proposes honour as a reward of goodness and virtue. Our Saviour promises it to those that are humble and condescending; if thou art ready at some entertainment to seat thyself in a lower place; *Luke* xiv. 10. *The master of the feast shall exalt thee, and thou shalt have worship in the presence of those that sit at meat with thee; for he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.* St. Paul tells the christians, *do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise from the ruling power, for magistrates are appointed for the praise of them that do well;* 1 Pet. ii. 14. Solomon proposes the same motive; Prov. iv. 7, 8. *Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get wisdom;—she shall bring thee to honour when thou dost embrace her.* The apostle recommends often to the christians of his day a

good name amongst infidels and heathens, a good report of them which are without; and he mentions it as an eminent character of a companion of Titus, that his praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches; 2 *Cor.* viii. 18. And it is recorded to the honour of Demetrius by St. John, that he had *a good report of all men, even of the truth itself*; 3 John verse 12. Christians and heathens speak well of him, and his good character is just and true. Nor must it be forgotten, that in this little collection of advices in my text the apostle twice recommends such practices as deserve honour among men, *viz.* things of good report, and things worthy of praise.

Surely if we did but consider how much our Saviour and his gospel gain by it in the world, we should ever be engaged in works of good report, and practising that which may redound to our praise, for hereby we spread a good savour of the name of Christ wide in the world, and our holy religion reaps sensible honour and advantage by it. When the name of any person is celebrated amongst men for something great and useful, when his deeds are mentioned with public praise, it is quickly enquired, "What religion is he of?" Is he a heathen? Then the glory will be ascribed to idolaters, and the honour perhaps be given to their idols. Is he a christian? Then the name of Christ our Lord will gain reputation by it, and men will speak more favourably of that doctrine which was adorned with such eminent virtue and piety. This did unknown service to the gospel in the first propagation of it, when it appeared in the world, that the characters and the lives of christians were lovely, that their works were all goodness, that they were persons of an excellent spirit, and obtained a good report among their heathen neighbours: they saw their good works, and were thereby led, by degrees, to glorify their heavenly Father, and their Saviour.

And where there is any separation made from the public worship of a nation, with a profession to reform any corruptions of doctrine or practice, how much honour would be done to these reforming principles, and how much service to this interest, if every one that is engaged in it were always practising things of good report, and aiming at some eminency and uncommon goodness in their various stations of life. If therefore we have any love for Christ our Lord, if we have any zeal for his glory, if we have any regard to the honour of the gospel, or if we would bring any credit to the particular profession we make, let us set a severe watch upon ourselves against every thing that would blemish our character in the world, and let us aspire to all superior excellencies that are within our reach, that we may be *to the praise of the glory of his grace, who has made us accepted in the beloved*; Eph. i. 6.

It is necessary here to remove two or three objections out of the way, that may seem to attend this exhortation of the apostle.

The first is this: If a good name be so valuable a thing, why should there be such a woe denounced by our Saviour against those that have the good word of all men: Luke vi. 26. *Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you; for so did their fathers to the false prophets.*

I. Answer. That the design of our Saviour is to shew, that no man in a degenerate and corrupt age, can attain the high esteem and hearty good word of all persons in the world, but those who are time-servers and hypocrites, who can suit themselves to every company, and comply with every change of the times; who can profess to be religious, and yet indulge themselves or others in the practice of their secret iniquities; such were the false prophets of old. Such a person as this may for a short season get all men to speak well of him: The drunkards will commend him, for he can get drunk as well as they, and the swearer, for he can join with them in swearing; and the men of piety may be deceived in him, and give him a good report, for his tongue is tipped with religious language, and he seems to be a saint; but in reality he is an universal hypocrite, and true to nothing. Our Lord Jesus hates and censures such a character as this is, and this is the design of his reproof. Again,

II. Let it be noted, that this sort of sinners can hold the good word of all men but for a very short time. The drunkards, the profane, and the lewd, may caress a man for a season who complies with their vices; yet when they hear that he pretends to be religious among persons of piety, they will speak evil of him in abundance, and brand him for an hypocrite, which is a more loathsome name; and his pious acquaintance, when they shall find out his practice of secret wickedness, they will justly fix the same odious character upon him: Thus he who before had the good word of all men, shall then be loaded with public scandal and infamy. I add further,

III. That a good report signifies a good character and honourable reputation among all wise and good men, upon the account of valuable qualities, and the exercise of virtue and goodness; and where a man manages his affairs with an excellent conduct in this respect, and keeps himself without a blemish, he will command some degree of esteem and reverence from the viler part of the world: His good name will be general, though perhaps not universal; and if the wicked world finds occasion to speak evil of him in any thing, it is only in the matters of

his God, and his exemplary practice of piety. This thought introduces

The second objection, *viz.* if a good name amongst men be so desirable, why does our Saviour say, *Mat.* v. 11, 12. *Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and shall speak all manner of evil against you, falsely for my sake; then rejoice ye, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so persecuted they the prophets that were before you.*

Answer. It is supposed that the evil which men speak of you is false; for so our Saviour expresseth it, *when they shall speak all manner of evil against you, falsely for my sake.* They shall scandalize you as being ill men, merely because you are christians; and throw upon you many odiums, which your practice has never deserved, on purpose to expose the christian religion. The apostle Peter agrees with our Lord Jesus Christ in the same design; 1 *Pet.* iii. 16. Keep *a good conscience, that whereas they speak evil of you as evil-doers, they may be ashamed while they falsely accuse your good conversation in Jesus Christ.*

Now when it appears to be pure hatred of God and of goodness, of Christ and his gospel, for which you are reproached, then you have cause to rejoice, because Christ is on your side: So he was reproached in the days of his flesh, so the prophets that went before him, and the apostles that succeeded him; 1 Pet. iv. 14. *The Spirit of God and of glory resteth upon you, for on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.* Happy are ye, for Christ and you are joined together in the same cause: and you who have glorified him on earth, shall be glorified together with him in heaven.

The third objection is this; if praise amongst men be lawful to be sought, how comes it to pass that there are so many reproofs given to those who seek the praise of men? How can these scriptures be reconciled with some others that are cited before to encourage actions worthy of praise! How often does our Saviour severely rebuke the pharisees for this practice, that *they do their good works to be seen of men?* Mat. vi. 2, 5, 16. John v. 44.

Answer. It is evident that these hopocrites whom our Saviour reproves, neglected all inward piety before God, and practised the outward forms of godliness merely to gain the *praise of men*, they *loved* and *valued* it *more than the praise of God*; John xii. 43. They received honour of one another, and had no concern about that superior blessing, that divine esteem and approbation which God only can bestow, and which only would stand them in stead hereafter. Where the praise of God is inconsistent with the praise of men, there it is evident we must despise the censures or the praises of the world, and seek the divine

approbation only: But where these two benefits may be happily conjoined, we are not bound to separate them. God never requires us to seek infamy and reproach, or to abandon that honour that belongs to truth and goodness.

But that I may more effectually guard every christian against all the dangers and temptations that may attend a good name, and honour in the world, I would conclude the discourse with these four advices:

I. Make not the praise of men your chief aim or design in any thing you do: But let it be your first and chiefest care to approve yourselves to God and your own consciences. Do those actions that are worthy of praise; and whether the world acknowledge it or no, your souls will find inward peace, your labour of love shall not be forgotten of God, *he is faithful who hath promised;* Heb. x. 23.

II. If you are so happy as to obtain the esteem of men, set a guard upon your soul, lest pride and vanity take occasion to arise and shew themselves. Have a care lest Satan the tempter gain an advantage against you by the fruits of your virtue and the eminence of your graces. Pride is such a cursed twining weed, it will sometimes root itself in virtue and honour, it will grow up to an equal height, and make its supporters wither and die.

III. Let all the honour you acquire among men, be improved to the honour of your God and Saviour. If you make your own applause your great end, Jesus will say to you another day, as he did once to the pharisees, *Verily I say unto you, ye have your reward*; Mat. vi. 2, 5, 16. The praise of men will be your whole recompence, and there is nothing more remains for you. Whensoever therefore you receive applause from the world, make the world know that it was not the man but the christian that practised the virtue, and gained the praise. *Not I, but the grace of God, which was with me;* 1 Cor. xv. 10. If you so manage all your laudable actions, that Jesus Christ and his name may gain some honour by them, this shall turn to your praise and glory in the day of Christ, as well as to the praise of God your Saviour.

IV. When the providence of God and his grace have favoured you so far as to gain a good character in the world, have a care of every thing that may impeach your honour, or sully your reputation. Remember the lesson that Solomon teaches you from so contemptible a thing as a dead fly; a few of them will *cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour; so does a little folly disgrace a man who is in reputation for wisdom and honour;* Eccl. x. 1. The blemish that arises from one base or foolish action will darken a bright character,

and cancel the honour that has cost the labour of many years to acquire; And the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ will suffer much by it also, if those persons once descend to folly and disgrace, who have risen high before in the regions of wisdom and public esteem.

Happy those christians who walk closely with God to the end of life, and keep their garments unspotted! When they die, they leave a perfumed name behind them to the churches, and to the families to which they have belonged; and perhaps they bequeath a lasting honour to religion as long as the world shall stand. Such has been the character of some of the saints in ancient ages of the world, such in the elder and later days of christianity: The brightness and savour of their good name abides to this day amongst us, as an ornament to religion, and a rich perfume to the gospel of our Lord Jesus. To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. *Amen.*

HYMN FOR SERMON XXX.

Christian Morality, viz. *Courage and Honour.*

DO I believe what Jesus saith,
And think his gospel true?
Lord, make me bold to own my faith,
And practise virtue too.

Suppress my shame, subdue my fear,
Arm me with heavenly zeal,
That I may make thy power appear,
And works of praise fulfil.

If men shall see my virtue shine,
And spread my name abroad;
Thine is the power, the praise is thine,
My Saviour and my God!

Thus when the Saints in glory meet,
Their lips proclaim thy grace;
They cast their honours at thy feet,
And own their borrow'd rays.

SERMON XXXI.

Holy Fortitude, or Remedies against Fear.

Cor. xvi. 13.——Stand Fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.

the first ages of christianity, the professors of the gospel great need of divine courage, that they might stand the y shocks of opposition, reproach and violence. The Corin- ı heathens, though they were a polite and learned people, yet were blind and obstinate in their own superstitions and idola- and rooted in the profane and vicious customs of their ances- It required a large stock of holy fortitude, to profess and tise a new religion among them, that ran counter to all their ıer opinions, and their manners. Therefore St. Paul, who ted the gospel in that city, calls upon his converts to shake owardice and fear, to stand firm and unmoved in the profes- of their faith, to behave like men of war, like heroes, in practice of christianity, and to exert all their strength of soul ıis glorious work. *Stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, rong.*

It is true, we live not in a heathen country, among lewd and arous superstitions: The land where our lot is cast, is ho- ed with the christian name, and professes the religion of ıs: yet let me tell you, infidelity is a growing temptation of age, the gospel of Christ hath plentiful ridicule thrown upon y many of our neighbours that go under the name of chris- ı, and we may sometimes be called to put on courage for the nce of this gospel.

But besides this, there are many things occuring in the ne life, that require us to put on this holy fortitude of soul. very nature of men is so corrupt and vicious, their hearts are ıverse to the holy precepts of christianity, the multitude of ers is so exceeding great in every nation, even where the el is professed, the customs of this world are so contrary to rules of the gospel, and the malice and rage of Satan with evil angels, is so constant and so violent against the religion the name of Christ, that it is true at all times, as well as in primitive age, *that all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall r persecution;* 2 Tim. iii. 12. When we become soldiers of ist, and resolve to be religious in good earnest, we must

reckon upon enemies and oppositions, we must be prepared to endure hardness; chapter ii. verse 3.

Our business therefore is, to seek for a spirit of power and holy fortitude, that we may be void of fear in the profession of our faith, and in the practice of our daily duties. Not the Corinthians only, but we also, *must watch, and stand fast in the faith, we must quit ourselves like men, and be strong.* If we are frighted at the sound of every reproach, or terrified by the fierce opposition of a wicked world, we shall be in danger of turning back from the paths of christianity, and of losing the heavenly prize. Such doctrines, and such practices as the gospel teaches, require the professors of them to be bold and valiant.

And besides the difficulties we shall meet with from a degenerate and sinful world, there are many other trials that attend the christian life. Sorrows and sufferings belong to human nature, in this fallen and unhappy state: *Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward*; Job v. 7. This earth is designed for a stage of conflict, a scene of probation, where each of us must act our parts, under the eye and notice of God our supreme governor, and our final rewarder. He expects that we should put on a sacred hardiness of soul; he requires that we should not indulge a spirit of fear, but be armed with power and courage, that we may endure to the end. And blessed be his name that he hath given us promises to raise our hope, that as he endued his people in ancient times with his grace, so he will bestow this spirit of holy fortitude upon us also, and that as our day is, so our strength shall be.

To cast my discourse into some method, I shall,

First, Briefly describe this divine temper of mind. In the next place, *Secondly,* I would represent the various occasions which we shall find for the exercise of it. *Thirdly,* I shall mention a few motives to incite us to acquire this holy fortitude, and to maintain it throughout our whole course of life. And *Fourthly,* propose some remedies against a spirit of slavish fear, which is directly opposite to this christian virtue.

The first thing proposed is, to describe what I mean by fortitude and courage; and to this end, we must distinguish it into that of the active and that of the passive kind. Active valour or courage, is such a temper of soul, as to attempt and venture upon any bold act of duty, which may endanger our present ease, and worldly interest; and prompts us to pursue it with a becoming steadiness and bravery of mind, undaunted at every opposition we meet with, and unterrified at all the threatening dangers that stand in our way. Passive valour is such an habitual firmness and constancy of soul, as enables us to bear what sufferings we

fall under, without repinings and inward vexations, and without any outward tokens of sinking and despondency. When we sustain heavy sorrows, or anguish of the flesh, without any wild and unreasonable groanings of nature, without rage and unbecoming resentment, without tumult and confusion of spirit. And this should be the temper of our souls, and our christian conduct, whether the sufferings which we feel, arise from the immediate hand of God, or from the injustice and violence of men.

In the second place, I come to represent the various occasions that we shall find in the christian life, for the exercise of this holy courage, and that under both kinds of it; viz. the active and the passive, or that which consists in doing, and that which consists in suffering; and I shall enlarge upon each of them in a practical way. Active valour is necessary for a professor of the christian faith: And when and wheresoever divine providence gives us any just occasions for the exercise of this sort of fortitude, let no christian refuse them, or shamefully withdraw from his duty. The occasions we have for it are such as these:

I. When we are called to profess and practise strict piety, even under the special view and notice of profane sinners. Perhaps our dwelling may be cast among profligate wretches, who live without God in the world; but we must not be afraid to own, that we fear the great God, and that we worship that awful name, which their blasphemies affront and vilify. Nor must we be ashamed to let the world know, that we cannot pass a day without calling upon our God, and that prayer is as necessary to us, as our daily food. It is strange and monstrous that it should ever be accounted a matter of shame among creatures to acknowledge the God that made them, or that it should ever need any courage to profess homage and adoration to our Creator! What degenerate times do we live in, that it should require some fortitude to tell the world, that we who are creatures confess a God! And yet sometimes even this very fortitude is wanting, and we are contented to look like atheists, lest we should be thought religious. Base cowardise! and degenerate times indeed!

II. When we happen into the company of infidels and apostates from christianity, who throw their impious jests on the gospel of Christ, we may find a plain call of providence to stand up for his name and honour.

It is true, there are few of us who are sent to travel beyond the seas, and to engage in necessary converse about religion with heathens; but I hinted before, that infidelity is a growing mischief of the present age, even in our own land. It seems to be a spreading infection, and how far the great God may suffer it to prevail, he only knows. There are multitudes already that have made shipwreck of the faith of Christ, and betake themselves

only to the dim and glimmering light of nature, as a sufficient refuge for their souls, and their only guide in matters of religion: A poor doubtful guide, and a dangerous refuge! And yet these men are continually instructing one another to wage war against the blessed gospel, and rise in arms of defiance against the only Saviour. It is proper then for us to enquire, are we ready to declare ourselves christians if we are called to it, when deists and scoffers surround us with their abominable jests, or their wanton cavils? For though sometimes they argue against our creed with calmness and decency, yet it must be confessed that those are the most common weapons which this sort of men make use of. Dare we now make a profession of our faith among men of infidelity, and not value their banter, and their insolent reproaches? Let us remember, that christian courage must encounter mockery and slanders as well as other terrors: Courage must guard us against sinful shame, as well as against sinful fear. Can we glory in a crucified Saviour as the wisdom and the power of God, if we should be placed between the Jews on one side, and the heathens on the other, who load this doctrine with folly and scandal. St. Paul was a brave example; O that every soul of us could as bravely imitate him! But let us proceed to some more occasions of courage a-kin to this.

Perhaps we content ourselves to be christians in our closets, and to frequent the public assemblies of worship without shame or fear, because our neighbours do the same: But I would enquire of such general professors of christianity, why are you so backward to give up your names to Christ, and attend on the special ordinance of his holy supper? Is it not because you are ashamed to appear in such a strict profession of godliness, and to be known and observed by the world, as those that have devoted themselves to the Lord in his church? This is certainly the case of some younger converts. Let them here be put in mind of their former neglects, and their present duty. Be strong in the Lord, banish a shameful shame, and seal your covenant in the blood of Christ. His cross is your hope, and why should you not make it your glory too?

If you are ashamed of such a public profession in peaceful times, what will ye do if days of trial should come? Would you be ready to vindicate your separation from the church of Rome, and all its superstitions? Would you have courage enough to maintain the purity of your profession, and your close adherence to scripture, in opposition to all the inventions and traditions of men? Would your heart be strong to persist in your peculiar practices of religion, in the most scriptural forms of it, in an hour of persecution and danger? Blessed be God for a protestant king on the throne, and a glorious race of protestant princes to succeed

m. May the blessings of heaven from above descend on em all, and render them in their successions an everlasting essing to Great Britain and all the protestant churches! But christian indeed should be so formed, and so furnished, as be ready to profess and practise his religion in every nation, d in every age, in the midst of storms as well as under the ining sun.

III. When we are called to practise an unfashionable virtue, to refuse compliance with any fashionable vice. This is ano- er occasion that demands the exercise of christian fortitude. et us survey a few instances of this kind.

It is an unfashionable thing now-a-days to introduce a word practical godliness into company: The polite world will tell , it spoils conversation: Mark, what a silence is spread over e room, when any person dares to begin so disagreeable a sub- ct; there is none to second him, he may preach alone, and it is ell if he escapes a profane scoff. This is a very true, but a very ameful account of things, according to the present mode. Any ing but religion is thought fit to entertain a friend. Even here persons of piety meet together in their visits, this sort of nguage is banished from company and the parlour, and it is nfined only to God and the closet. Alas! we are ashamed to pear truly religious; but if we had holy courage enough, one rson would not be afraid to begin, nor another to carry on such vine discourse. There are surely some happy moments nerein an useful word may be introduced with prudence and de- ncy, to warm each other's hearts, and to rekindle the holy fire love and devotion that is almost expiring.

Again, perhaps we may be much engaged in the world among rsons that make no conscience of speaking truth: But if we ould be christians indeed, we must have courage enough always shew a hatred of falsehood, and keep up a tenderness of spirit, t we be drawn to the borders of a lie; nor must we be ashamed let the world know that we are the devoted servants of truth. Then some knavish or unjust practice has overspread a city or a untry, and become almost universal, we must dare to be honest a cheating world; we must maintain our righteousness, and it shine in the midst of a deceitful age, though perhaps we ay be called scrupulous fools. If we happen to be engaged in cessary business with persons who drink to excess, we must ldly deny the imposed glass, we must secure our own sobriety, en in the midst of drunkards, and as much as possible avoid eir society: Nor should any scandalous names of puritan and ecisian affright us from the paths of strict holiness. When we et with gross affronts in the world, we may be made the scorn d jest of all the company, if we decline the modish customs of

satisfaction and bloody revenge; we may be charged with cowardice among the ruffians of the age; but a man of honour must have courage to bear this charge, unless he will venture to run upon the sword of God which is drawn and pointed against revenge, duelling, and murder.

When the fashion of dress or visits, of salutations or entertainments, exceeds the bounds of modesty or temperance, or intrenches upon truth or religion, we must bravely dare to be unfashionable, and *have no fellowship with any unfruitful works of darkness;* Eph. v. 11. We must obey the great and holy God, rather than comply with the sinful customs of men.

> "'Tis brave to meet the world, stand fast among
> "Whole crowds, and not be carried with the throng."

I grant that religion doth not consist in singularity, but there are some seasons when we must be singular, if we would be holy, and exert a sacred fortitude of soul, to secure ourselves from the defilements of the world. *Come out from among them is the language of God in such cases, touch not the unclean thing, and be ye separate, saith the Lord*; 2 Cor. vi. 17.

IV. Another instance of necessary courage, is, when we are called to undertake the cause of the oppressed, to plead for the poor against the mighty, or to vindicate the innocent against the men of slander or violence. It is a cowardly spirit, a spirit of shameful pride, or selfish meanness, to trample upon those that are lying upon the ground, to tread upon the poor and the distressed, and sometimes through fear of the mighty, as well as scorn of the poor, to neglect the cries of those that are injured. This indeed is the custom of the world; but if we be the disciples of Christ, we must have more courage than this, we must *open our mouths for the dumb*, and plead the cause of those that cannot speak for themselves; *Prov.* xxxi. 8.

When we happen into company that delight in scandal, and the slander goes round from tongue to tongue, we must first guard our lips from the infamous compliance, though we cannot defend our ears: And then we should have some compassion on the absent person, who perhaps may be loaded with calumny and lies: Nor should we be afraid or ashamed to put in a relieving word; to support the good name of those that are oppressed by malicious reproaches. And if the censure be never so just, yet where providence doth not plainly call us to join in that censure, let us not betray such an inclination to evil-speaking, nor shew such a base and mean soul, as to call names for company.

Where the life or the estate of our neighbour is in danger, we must venture something to secure it, as well as to defend his good name. This advice is given in Prov. xxiv. 11, 12. *If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn out to death, and those that*

are ready to be slain; if thou sayest, behold, we knew it not, doth not he that pondereth the heart consider? That is, if there are any persons drawn out to death, and ready to be slain by sinful oppression, and that thou had a just and reasonable power in thine hand to preserve them, it is not thy duty to stand still or hide thyself, and say, *behold I knew it not.* He that lets the ox or the ass of his neighbour go astray or sink under a burden, and passeth away regardless as though he did not know it, is under the censure of the word of God; and much more do we deserve the censure, if we abandon our fellow-creatures of human nature to perish, when we are able to save them. The all-wise and almighty God considers it, and he will not approve of such meanness of spirit, and such a shameful defect of christian charity.

V. It is a work which calls for courage to admonish our brethren when they depart from the ways of righteousness, and to reprove sin among those with whom we converse. The law of God requires it; *Lev.* xix. 17. *Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him.* It is expressed as though a neglect of reproof, where it is a duty, looks like a sort of hatred, or want of love. But for the most part it is want of courage forbids it. Let it be done with holy boldness; but without wrath and resentment, or selfish revenge; let it be expressed and managed with all love and gentleness, with all humility and compassion, and with a becoming exereise of those lovely characters of moderation and meekness, which I have elsewhere described.

Nathan the prophet ingeniously reproved David the king for his adultery and murder. And we should learn the most artful and obliging methods, and the softest language of reproof, that we may practise it with more courage, security, and success; and the more secret it is, it will generally be most successful. If at any time we are called by most evident providence, to give an open rebuke in the face of the world, together with courage, we must put on all wisdom and humility, lest we publish our own conceit and pride, and provoke wrath without hope of success. When we rebuke the profane and impious wretch, for the most glaring iniquity, we should use our best prudence in distinguishing proper seasons, *lest we cast a pearl before swine, and it become useless, and be trodden under foot;* Mat. vii. 6.

Sometimes it it is hard to know what is our duty in this respect but thus far in general it may be said, This should be done whensoever there is a great and evident probability of doing service to God and souls by it: Whensoever a vindication of the name of God and his honour requires it, or when there is any

just hope of doing good to men; there is indeed a time to keep silence in this case, and there is a time to speak. O may the word and Spirit and providence of God join together to give us direction in this difficult duty, and courage to perform it!

VI. Reformation of all kinds, whether in families or churches, in cities, or nations, demands a good degree of resolution and courage. It is a brave and daring enterprize, to stem the torrent of the age we live in, and to attempt to change the vicious customs of a city or nation. We must have a soul inspired with zeal for piety and goodness, if we would contest the point with the guilty, and cover them with deserved shame, or bring them to deserved punishment. Blessed be God there are societies formed in our age for this glorious purpose! May everlasting success attend their zeal, and may their heads be covered with divine protection in every hour of danger!

We have need of courage to stand up for truth and purity in the church of Christ, when it is over-run with corrupt doctrines, wicked heresies, superstitions, and false worship. We must use our endeavour to root out these evil weeds by all the sacred influences of reason and scripture; not by rage and violence, not by fraud and falsehood, not by slander and scandalous language, not by calling in the power of the magistrate and the sword of the state to assist us; Christ hath not allowed his followers such weapons as these against superstition and heresy; *The sword of the Spirit is the word of God*; Eph. vi. 17. *The weapons of our warfare are not carnal*; 2 Cor. x. 4.

And when we have endeavoured to reform the offenders by all christian methods, and find no success, we must dare to separate ourselves from the many and the mighty, who will not be reformed. This was the glorious practice of our fathers, the protestants and the puritans, in the several seasons of their reformation, when they were called to oppose the greater or the lesser corruptions of the christian church.

If our kindred or families are fallen into any foolish, vain, or sinful practices, or any civil society to which we belong hath departed from the rules of justice or truth, it belongs to a christian to become a public good, by using his influence, as far as it goes, toward the rectifying of every disorder. He should put on a divine fortitude, whensoever providence calls him to attempt a reformation amongst them. There is need of a noble spirit and a pious bravery, to rise up against any foolish or vicious customs, to combat any rooted principles or habits of error or iniquity, and to oppose any number of persons that are engaged in an evil course. Moses forbids us *to follow a multitude to do evil;* Ex. xxiii. 2. And there are seasons when we may be called to oppose a multitude of evil-doers: And though no man stand by us,

yet we are bound to stand by the cause of God and goodness. So divine a cause deserves and demands such divine courage.

How glorious was the character of Caleb and Joshua, who spoke well of the land of promise, and encouraged the armies of Israel while all the rest of the spies which were sent *brought an evil report upon the good land:* Num. xiii. 31, 32. The people believed the evil report, and spoke of stoning Joshua and Caleb. But the *glory of the Lord appeared in the tabernacle*, and God himself gave a testimony from heaven to the sacred courage and honour of these Jewish heroes. What a brave spirit dwelt in Elijah, who attempted to reform Israel from idolatry! He would not fall down and worship Baal, though he thought he had been left alone, the only worshipper of the true God in the nation; 1 *Kings* xix. 14.

VII. There are some other, and very common occasions for the exercise of sacred courage, which attend persons especially in the lower ranks of life: As for instance; when a servant is called by providence to speak the truth, and yet he dare not do it without offending his master: When a poor man is required to bear witness in some important concern, and his rich neighbour frowns and looks sour upon him: When a person of an inferior character is tempted to join with the mighty in some unjust and dishonourable practices, and while his superiors invite him to it, his conscience forbids his compliance. It is a noble act of christian courage, in such instances as these, to follow truth, equity, and conscience, wheresoever they lead, in opposition to all the allurements, the frowns, and the threatenings of persons in an higher station. Let those who fall under such a temptation remember, *there is an higher than the highest*, and the great God, the Lord of heaven and earth, is the patron of truth and righteousness, the guardian of innocence, and the dreadful avenger of deceit and lying.

I might add other instances of a kindred nature in common life, wherein christian fortitude is greatly necessary, especially in this corrupt and degenerate age: As when a trader must look poverty in the face, and meet approaching ruin in his outward circumstances, unless he make some inroad upon his honesty, and practise falsehood and deceit. But if the case be thus, if a christian sees himself sinking in the world, by the frowns of providence, he must dare to sink rather than cheat his neighbour, and save himself by any base and dishonest methods. A man of religion and honour must stand firm to his word, must follow strict equity in all things, and neither enter into any methods of fraud, nor of violence, to retrieve his decaying circumstances.

O how many little knavish contrivances do persons often

practise to secure a good bargain to themselves, and sometimes they support their dying credit in the world at the expence and loss of their innocent neighbour! They borrow what they know they are not able to pay: They draw up false accounts of their own estate: They impose upon the credulous with words of a double meaning, or with downright lies: They almost forget they are christians, for fear lest they should be undone, and practise the things at which an heathen would have blushed and started, because they have not courage enough to be honest and poor.

VIII. Christians have need of holy fortitude, to venture their lives at the demand of providence, and expose themselves to violence, and to a bloody death. Sometimes they are called to this glorious service in the cause of God and his church: So were many of the prophets, the apostles, and primitive christians, as well as the martyrs of later ages. Sometimes in the cause of our country, divine providence calls us to expose our blood, and to assist or guard the nation against invasions from abroad, or tumults at home, and to quell the rage of a brutal multitude. In a just and necessary war for our country, or in a defence of our natural or religious rights, we may fight with christian courage, when we have well surveyed the justice of our cause, and find it approved of God. And there are seasons when we may be called to venture our lives for our christian brethren; 1 *John* iii. 15.

But perhaps some of these things may come as naturally also under the head of passive valour and courage: And indeed the most active valour of the greatest heroes is built upon that which is passive. It is on this account they dare venture to expose their flesh to wounds, their names to reproach, or their bodies to death, because they can bear the wounds, the reproaches, or death itself with a noble serenity and fortitude of soul. All the active boldness in the world is but rashness and folly where such a hardiness and patience are utterly wanting. Of this passive valour I shall mention but two particular cases wherein christians must exert themselves.

I. When we are called to bear sickness, pain, shame, losses, disappointments, all the sorrowful changes of life, or death itself from the mere hand of God. This is to be done with a steadiness of spirit, with a firmness of soul, with christian fortitude, with a sacred and serene calm upon all our powers and passions, without fretting or vexing, or inward disquietude. It is a sign of a weak mind to be overset with every blast of wind. *If thou faintest in the day of adversity, thy strength is but small;* Prov. xxiv. 10. We must not indeed *despise the chastening of the Almighty, nor must we faint when we are rebuked of him;* Heb. xii. 5.

Let the men of this world that know not Christ, that are not acquainted with the gospel, and have not felt the powers of the world to come, let them fret and grow peevish at every disappointment that falls upon them in their earthly comforts, or when their flesh is visited with sore pains: But it does not become a a christian to be sour and fretful under the afflicting hand of God, for it is the hand of his heavenly Father. To be overwhelmed and almost distracted with the crosses we meet with in the world, is not becoming the character of a child of God, one that is high born, that has his birth from heaven, and his family there; it is a shame for him to grow wild with impatience, or to run into desperate courses for relief. This is not courage, but mere cowardice of soul, to put an end to our own life in order to escape from our sorrows. The wisest among the heathens reproved it as a meanness of spirit; and surely it is much more unbecoming the religion of Christ, and that divine fortitude that every christian should be endued with. We are not to be affrighted, though the mountains should be turned upside down, and cast into the midst of the sea. The Lord of hosts is our shield and defence, he is a rock above all the waves, and if our feet are fixed upon this rock, what need have we for terror? The name of the God of Jacob, in the xlvi. Psalm, is a match for all our foes, and a sovereign remedy for all our fears.

Christian courage appears also upon a bed of sickness, when, at the call of God, we look death in the face with a chearful soul. When all our friends stand around us, and every one, by the lamentable air that sits in their faces, gives us notice of our approaching dissolution, then to look upon death with a serene countenance, and not be affrighted, but venture boldly into the invisible world; this is a glorious fortitude derived from the grace of faith.

II. Another instance of passive valour is, when we bear persecutions of all sorts from the hand of men with a holy courage, for the sake of God. When we can be plundered of our possessions in this world, and stripped of all our comforts, and yet be easy. *Ye took joyfully the spoiling of your goods*, says the apostle to the Hebrews; *chapter* x. *verses* 33, 34. *and ye endured the great fight of afflictions with chearfulness, knowing that in heaven ye have a better and more enduring substance.* In Heb. xi. verse 36. when the apostle speaks of the ancient Jewish saints, *they had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, of bonds and imprisonments, they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheep-skins, and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented:* but they were men above this world, *of whom the world was not worthy*: They had a

spirit of divine courage that made them too great for this world, although they were almost banished out of it, and wandered among the beasts of the earth. Let not christians then be guilty of base and mean compliances, to preserve their substance in the world, nor to cover their names from slanders and infamy, nor to secure their liberties or their lives when Christ calls us to part with them. If there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things. If there be any call to the practice of such courage, for the sake of Christ, remember these exhortations, and be not afraid.

Thus I have given you variety of instances both of active and passive valour, as they are to be exercised in the christian life: I fear they are too many for the best and boldest of us to practise, even under all our advantages. But in order to render them a little more easy to christians, the following motives and directions may give some assistance under the influence of the blessed Spirit. And these shall be the subject of the next discourse.

Recollection.—And now, O my soul, it is time to turn thy thoughts inward, and enquire, how much of this discourse is suited to thy own case? Thou acknowledgest there is a God, but art thou not sometimes ashamed to call upon him in the morning for his presence all the day, lest thy companions should know thou hast been upon thy knees? Hast thou courage to ask a blessing on thy food in the place where others deride the practice?

Thou hast learned and thou hast believed the religion of Christ, but hast thou ever yet had courage enough to make a solemn and public profession of it? Hast thou ever yet publicly given thy name up to Christ as one of his subjects, and joined thyself to his visible kingdom amongst men: Or art thou only a believer in secret, ashamed to make profession of thy faith, by joining thyself to some christian assembly? If this be thy state, thou hast now a loud call to add fortitude to thy faith, and assume christian courage to profess the sacred name in which thou hast believed.

Or art thou a professor of this holy religion? Thou hast listed thyself under the banner of Christ, in these days of liberty and peace, and while thou dwellest among those who encourage thy faith and profession. But enquire into thyself, hast thou such a love to the gospel, as to glory in it even amongst infidels, who make it the object of their mockery and reproach? Has this divine religion so deep a root in thy heart, as to bear and resist the storms of the world, and to stand firm and flourish still? Hast thou courage to declare thyself a disciple of the cross, and a professor of a crucified Saviour, when thou shalt happen to be in the company of those who blaspheme him?

Hast thou obtained holy boldness enough to practise virtue when it is out of fashion. and canst thou refuse to comply with the warmest temptations to a fashionable sin? Hast thou got such a victory over thyself as to dare to be singular, if thy company would lead thee into any modish vice? This is an hard lesson to young and tender minds, but it must be learned. O my soul, if thou wilt be a christian indeed, hast thou courage to vindicate the innocent, when he is assaulted with slanders, and to frown upon those who delight in scandal? Or art thou so meanly spirited, as to join in a common jest, that is thrown upon the absent, and to mix with the odious tribe of back-biters? Remember this is a shameful baseness of spirit: but a christian must be a man of honour.

Canst thou see thy friends, thy companions, indulge a sinful course, and hast thou not one kind admonition for them? Hast thou not virtue and courage enough to warn thy brother, and to turn his foot from the path of iniquity, that leads to ruin and death? But remember also, that gentleness and love must attend thy rebukes, if thou ever desirest they should attain success. A reprover should have a bold, but a tender spirit. What zeal hast thou, O my soul, for reformation? Or canst thou bear with immoralities and corruptions of every kind? And rather than venture to displease man, wilt thou let thy neighbours go on for ever to displease God? What wouldest thou do, if thou wert called to face the great, and to profess religion before the mighty men of the earth? Is thy faith grown bold enough to shew itself in a court, in a palace, and to venture all thy earthly interests for the defence of it?

Thus far concerning thy active fortitude. But how stands the case with regard to passive valour, and enduring of sufferings? Is thy heart firm under sharp trials of providence? Canst thou resign thy health and thy ease into the hand of God without fretting or repining? Or doth thy courage faint, and thy impatience shamefully discover itself under the common pains and diseases of nature? I grant there is much of weakness derived even to a manly spirit, from the distempers of the flesh: When the nerves are unbraced, and the tabernacle of the body tottering, the soul partakes of the infirmities of this poor fleshly engine. O frail unhappy state of human nature, and souls that dwell in clay! But is it thy constant labour and prayer, that patience may have its perfect work, that thy spirit may be ever sedate under all the pains and disquietudes of this mortal flesh, and thy temper kept serene under all the frowns and clouds of heaven?

Art thou ready to face the king of terrors, and to descend into that dark valley? Thou must meet this adversary shortly, O my soul! Labour therefore daily to get courage and victory

over death, by faith in a dying and a rising Saviour. Happy is that faith that has no carnal fear attending it, but is got above the frowns and smiles of this world. My soul longs after it, and reaches at it, as something within the power of her present attainment through the grace of Christ. I long to be armed with this sacred courage, and to have my heart fortified all round with these divine munitions. I would fain be calm and serene in the midst of buffetings and reproaches, and pursue my course steadily toward heaven, under the banner of faith, through all the arrows of slander and malice. Lord Jesus, I wait for thy divine influence, to bestow this grace, and thy divine teachings, to put me in the way to obtain it.

HYMN FOR SERMON XXXI.

Holy Fortitude, or Remedies against Fear.

Am I a soldier of the cross,
A follower of the Lamb?
And shall I fear to own his cause,
Or blush to speak his name?

Must I be carry'd to the skies,
On flow'ry beds of ease;
While others fought to win the prize,
And sail'd through bloody seas?

Are there no foes for me to face?
Must I not stem the flood?
Is this vile world a friend to grace,
To help me on to God?

Sure I must fight if I would reign;
Increase my courage, Lord!
I'll bear the toil, endure the pain,
Supported by thy word.

Thy saints in all this glorious war
Shall conquer though they die;
They see the triumph from afar,
And seize it with their eye.

When that illustrious day shall rise,
And all thy armies shine
In robes of victory through the skies,
The glory shall be thine.

SERMON XXXII.

Holy Fortitude, or Remedies against Fear.

1 Cor. xvi. 13.—Stand fast in the Faith, quit you like Men, be strong.

AVING described this holy temper of spirit, this fortitude th of the active and passive kind, and having set before you rious occasions for its exercise in the christian life, I proceed w to the third thing which I proposed, and that is, to excite u by some engaging motives, to seek after this temper, which o necessary for a christian. I shall not enforce this from the ht of nature, and from the mere laws of reason, which have en joined with ambitious and selfish principles in some of the gan heroes, and have influenced many a man, in the days of athenism, to some great exploits of fortitude and fame. There nothing in all the principles of natural religion, that makes mind brave and noble but it receives high advancements and orious efficacy from christianity. I would call you,

First, To cast your eyes on the noble patterns of courage at you find in the New Testament. I do not invite you to editate the examples of heathen warriors, but consider the ample of christian heroes, your predecessors, who have stood st in the faith, who have quitted themselves like men, in nuerous and shining instances of active and passive courage. ook at the blessed apostles, Peter and John, when they rejoiced suffer shame for the sake of Christ their Lord, and boldly told e council of priests, that they must preach the name of Jesus, opposition to their menaces: They must obey God rather than en. Look at St. Paul the most eminent christian hero: Beold him in the midst of the Roman soldiers, and a violent muluude of unbelieving Jews. Hear how he acknowledges his alted Saviour before captains and centurions, before king grippa, before Felix and Festus, who were two successive overnors of Judea! And with the same fortitude of soul he ppeared before Cæsar, at Rome. *I am not ashamed*, says he, *the gospel of Christ*; Rom. i. 16. for he whom I have trusted is almighty to support me. Read that most generous and thetic speech of his; Acts xxi. 13. when the spirit of prophecy d foretold that Paul should be *bound at Jerusalem, and delivered captive into the hands of the Gentiles*; his friends and strangers

besought him not to go up to that city. Then Paul answered, *What mean ye to weep, and to break mine heart? For I am ready, not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.* I know, says he, *and the Holy Ghost is witness, that bonds and afflictions wait for me, but none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear to myself, that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God;* Acts xx. 24.

Now when a special occasion calls us to the exercise of this virtue, and to confess Christ before the world, for us to be mealy-mouthed, and baffled, and frighted at the countenances of men, this is to forsake the example of the blessed apostles, and obey men rather than God. The prophets and the apostles, the ancient saints and the primitive martyrs have given us noble patterns of this virtue; and why should our spirits fail us, or our lips tremble, if we are called to the same glorious confession? Is not our religion divine? Is not the gospel still worthy of the same honour? Is not our God the same almighty? Is not our Redeemer the same Jesus? And does not a dying, a rising, and a reigning Saviour deserve the same homage of our tongues, and demand the same glory at our hands? Yes, surely he demands it of us, and he deserves it infinitely: And not only his apostles, but his own example teacheth us to practise this fortitude, both of the active and the passive kind. In the

Second place then, behold this perfect pattern of fortitude, Jesus the Son of God: When he came into the world in the midst of poverty, and made but a mean figure, as the son of a carpenter, he was called to oppose the whole nation of the Jews, and the priests and princes of Jerusalem; he was sent to reform the vicious customs of a wicked and degenerate age. How did he stand and face danger without fear? When he went into the temple, with what a sacred zeal did he scourge the buyers and sellers out of his Father's house of prayer? Ye know what a noble testimony he bare to the truth, when he was called before the great men, the rulers of the church and state. You know again, what instances of passive courage our Lord Jesus manifested, when he was hatefully reproached, and suffered shameful indignities from a rude multitude: When he was persecuted, when he was buffeted, when he wrestled with many and mighty sorrows, when his friends left him alone in the hands of his cruel enemies.

It must be confessed, his spirit trembled within him, and he was sore amazed, when it pleased his Father *to bruise him, and put him to grief, and to make his soul an offering for sin;* Is. liii. 10. These were unknown and inexpressible burdens, that made

him groan indeed; and offered strong cries and tears to heaven, that the cup of terror might pass from him. If ever his courage seemed to fail him, it was in that agony in the garden, when he endured more than any mere man could bear. A formidable and a dismal hour, when the Father hid his face from him, and the powers of darkness fell upon him with angelic might and fury! But these are sorrows of atonement, which the saints are never called to suffer. And yet by secret divine supports, Jesus endured all these agonies, and upon the cross he triumphed not only over the malice of men, but *over principalities and powers of hell, and made an open shew of them;* Col. ii. 15. perhaps, before armies of the invisible world, and millions of applauding angels.

Read the sacred advice; Heb. xii. 1, 2, 3. Not only look ye, says the apostle, to the great cloud of witnesses that are gone before, but above all look to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of your faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, and despised the shame, and is set down at the right-hand of the throne of God. Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself," that opposed a multitude, a legion, a world of sinners, lest ye be weary and faint in your minds, nor let your spirits sink while you behold his divine fortitude: Let such an illustrious scene animate your souls, and inspire the fainting believer with new courage. Consider,

Thirdly, What you are; if you are christians, ye are soldiers of Christ, ye have already entered the lists, with all the powers of hell, and are ye afraid of *man that is a worm, and the son of man that is a worm?* Job xxv. 6. Ye have ranged yourselves under the banner of the Redeemer, and the Redeemer's army must fight against all the armies of darkness and their allies. You have set up to oppose sin and Satan, two powerful enemies, and are ye afraid to be brow-beaten by a fellow-worm, one who is weak and mortal like yourselves? Consider,

Fourthly, If ye are christians, what promises of the divine presence and help you have in the bible, and when the mighty God has given such divine encouragement, he chides his people into courage; Is. li. 12, 13. *I, even I am he that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass? And forgettest the Lord thy Maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth? and hast feared continually every day, because of the fury of the oppressor?* A generous and divine cordial to keep the soul from fainting! The presence of God is an effectual support. St. Paul found it so; *for when all men forsook him, the Lord stood by and strengthened him;* 1 Tim. iv. 16, 17. Alas! we are poor, feeble, trembling soldiers, our

hands hang down, and our faces gather paleness: But we dare to confront the terrors of this world, if we taste and feel such divine encouragements. We know that a weak christian can do wonders with an almighty Saviour and an all-sufficient promise. When St. Paul had this word given him, *My grace is sufficient for thee*, he could *glory even in infirmities*, that the *power of Christ might rest upon him*; 2 Cor. xii. 9. The little feeble man, of a *contemptible presence*, could do *all things through Christ strengthening him*; Phil. iv. 13. And every believer has the same Almighty Helper, the same gospel, and the same promises.

In the last place, consider the large and never-fading crown of glory, that awaits the conqueror at the end of the christian conflict. *Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life*; Rev. ii. 10. Consider the honour and triumph, those riches of glory, and that everlasting inheritance, that shall be your reward in the future world, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; *He that overcometh shall sit down with me on my throne*, &c. Rev. iii. 21. *He that overcometh shall inherit all things*; chap. xxi. 7. Put all these together in the balances, with a few crosses and disappointments, a little trouble and uneasiness, nay, though you should add torture and death in the same scale, you may easily judge which will outweigh. Gaze at your crown of life, and your immortal hopes, till you feel your souls divinely animated to the combat: Learn from the apostle, and assume that glorious language; *Our light afflictions, which are but for a moment*, are scarce to be mentioned or named *with the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory that shall be revealed*; 2 Cor. iv. 17. *Therefore we both labour and suffer reproach*; therefore we bear all present sorrows with holy courage, because we look not at the things that are seen, little things that are temporal; but look at the great unseen things that are eternal; 2 *Cor.* iv. 18.

The fourth and last general head of discourse shall now furnish us with some sacred remedies against this slavish fear. The passion of fear in general, is wisely wrought by the great God into human nature: It is a disturbance both of our animal composition, and of the mind upon the apprehension of some approaching evil, or upon the apparent danger of it. This is an excellent provision, which the God of nature has made, to guard us from many mischiefs. It is innocent and useful when it is fixed on a proper object, and exercised in a proper degree. It becomes a part of our religion when God is the object of our fear, whereby we maintain such a holy awe of his majesty, as awakens a constant desire to please him, joined with a temper of holy love.

But when we suffer creatures to raise and influence our
s upon every occasion, so as to ruffle and disquiet our spirits
hrow the soul from off its rest, and to turn us aside from the
ıdy course of duty, then it becomes a sinful and forbidden
sion, and we should make it our business to watch against it,
l suppress it. There are some persons so feeble in their native
ıstitutions, or their spirits are so weakened by the distempers
the flesh, that fear is a constant tyrant over them: Their case
o be pitied indeed, but they ought to stir up themselves as far
possible to shake off this bondage, lest it withhold them from
practice of necessary duties, and rob them of all the comforts
religion. This slavish fear is a disease of the mind, as well
a weakness of nature; and besides, our summoning together
the powers and precepts of reason, we should also apply the
nedies of religion, in order to remove it: If the divine Spirit
ıcur with his blessing, the following methods may be made
ppily successful:

I. See to it that ye are christians indeed, that you have the
ner of religion wrought in your hearts, otherwise your will
ver be able boldly to maintain the form and the profession of
in an hour of danger. Fear will prevail over every thing
; true faith: And if your religion be not inward and sincere
l built on solid foundations, it will tremble and totter, and be
great danger of being utterly lost. One hard name, one bit-
; reproach, one witty scoff or ugly slander, will dash the hy-
ırite out of countenance, and he dares not stand up for his
ıd and Saviour.

And remember also that your faith must be always kept
ake and lively. See to it that your hope be not only well
ablished, but you must preserve your evidences for heaven
er clear, that ye may look upon yourselves as the care and
arge of Christ, and under the special eye and protection of
ıd your Saviour. This was the divine foundation on which
e great apostle raised his courage in the gospel to so high a
gree. I am neither afraid to suffer these things, says he,
ıt is, bonds and imprisonments; nor am I ashamed of this
spel, for I know whom I have believed, I know him as my
viour, and I am persuaded he is able to keep that which I
ve committed to him against the day of his appearance; 2
m. i. 12.

If you would raise your spirits to a sublime pitch of holy
titude, brighten your faith and hope daily, by a frequent exa-
nation of the frame of your hearts, by watchful walking before
ıd, by committing your souls afresh into the hands of Jesus
d his Spirit, for pardoning and renewing grace, that you may
lieve on just and solid grounds, that you are the children of

God, and that Jesus is your salvation. A lively faith gives divine courage. Faith is a noble shield to ward off fear, and our helmet is the hope of salvation.

Take heed of defiling yourselves with sensuality: Take heed of any false biasses on your spirit, and wrong designs in your actions, lest you bring fresh guilt upon your consciences. Guilt will create fear, and fill the soul with a perplexing tumult of thoughts. But when the terrors of this world assault you on every side, reproaches and threatenings, the frowns of your friends, and the rage of your enemies, you may be all serene and peaceful within, while you maintain a sacred consciousness of soul, that you have been seeking the light of truth, and pursuing the path of duty. When I can say, God is my witness that I am sincerely labouring in his service, when I can look up to heaven, though my friends scorn me, and say, my record is on high; I may imitate the faith and courage of Job in his best hours, and leave all my interests in the hand of my God. Let our faith be active then, and our conscience clear, that we may read our title to all the promises, and apply them to our own case with courage and assurance. *The God of hope will fill us with all joy and peace in believing*; Rom. xv. 13.

The covenant of grace is a blessed treasury: There is armour of defence to be found against every assault and danger. If the promises of the covenant be ours, we shall be secured of a happy final issue of all our sufferings: *All things shall work together for our good*; Rom. viii. 28. *If God be for us who shall be against us?* verse 31. If we behold God engaged on our side, we may defy a legion of adversaries in the name of the Lord our God. *Thou art my glory*, says the Psalmist, *and my shield, and the lifter up of my head*; Ps. iii. 3. The little word, my, shews his own interest in his God, and then he can grow brave in the very centre of a thousand deaths and dangers. *I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people that have set themselves against me round about*; verse 6.

II. Get a large and general acquaintance with the promises of the gospel*, that in every special time of need you may have some suitable word of refuge and support. From xl. to the xlv. chapters of Isaiah, there is a variety of rich encouragements against slavish fear: And there is another treasure of them from the l. to lv. Many a christian has been able to live upon them, in the most dangerous and distressing seasons. They are divine springs of courage, and they overflow with consolation. The assurances of holy David in the midst of his perils, have been a

* A little book published lately by Mr. Samuel Clark, of St. Alban's, is of excellent use for this purpose. The title of it is "A Collection of the Promises of Scripture under their proper heads." 1720.

glorious support to the fearful soul. Several of his Psalms are filled with the same heavenly cordials. You can hardly find three of them together, without some triumphs of faith in them. In the writings of the evangelists, and in the epistles you may read many precious promises scattered abroad, to allay your fears. In the second and third chapters of the *Revelation*, they stand thick as the spangles of heaven: They sparkle like stars in the firmament at midnight, and they ever shine brightest in the darkest sky. It is with unknown pleasure that the soul of a christian contemplates and surveys those heavenly lights in the most gloomy and dismal hours, and they turn the shadows of death into morning.

Though it is of excellent use, to have the mind and memory well stored with the various promises of the covenant, yet in some special seasons of trial, it is of eminent advantage to keep the mind and thoughts fixed upon some single promise, that is most suited to the present danger or suffering; and to the present taste and relish of the soul. In such a season, the running speedily from one promise to another, and skimming over them with a slight survey, will not be so effectual a relief, as fixing upon some peculiar and proper word of grace, and living upon it for a whole day together. Thus every morning you may take some new comforter with you, and let it abide upon your heart all day, and it will whisper to your soul with divine sweetness in the dark and solitary watches of the night. When some special terror possesses your thoughts, and the heavy oppression returns often upon your spirits, or when any fresh assault comes on you from without or within, fly to the word you have chosen for your refuge; repeat it often, and cleave to it by meditation. *The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it and is safe*; Prov. xviii. 10. And remember God has magnified his own word above all the rest of his name; *Ps.* cxxxviii. 2. Try this method, it has been successful and well approved, and I doubt not but that you will be able to attest the success of it through the aids of divine grace.

III. Preserve the spirit of prayer always in exercise, and the spirit of fortitude will descend on you. Address the throne of God with earnestness and faith, and cry to the Lord the God of your salvation without ceasing. It is he gives spirits to renew the battle, when we are almost tired and grow weary; Is. xl. 28, 29. He gives courage in the midst of terrors, for he can preserve and secure us in the extremest perils. *We despaired of life*, saith the apostle, *and had the sentence of death in ourselves, but we were delivered, for we trusted in him that raiseth the dead*; 2 Cor. i. 8, 9, 10. It is he that repels the most imminent danger, it is he that rebukes the spirit of fear, and gives us the spirit

of power, and holy fortitude; 2 Tim. i. 7. *Wait on the Lord, and be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thy heart; wait I say on the Lord;* Ps. xxvii. 14.

But be sure in all your addresses to the mercy-seat, have an eye to Christ Jesus the Mediator, your advocate at the throne, and the Captain of your Salvation, who is engaged to see you brought safe to heaven. The Father has entrusted you as sheep in his hand, and he will not suffer you to perish. Look to him as your great High-priest and Intercessor in heaven; and *since you have such a High-priest as Jesus the Son of God, who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need*; Heb. iv. 14, 15, 16. Many a feeble christian who has gone to the mercy-seat, trembling and terrified under huge apprehensions of danger, and almost overwhelmed with tumultuous fears, has risen up from his knees with a heavenly calmness and composure: The army of his fears has vanished at once, and he has gone out to face the most formidable of his adversaries, with divine resolution and courage. "I sought the Lord and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. They looked unto him and were enlightened, and their faces were not ashamed. The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. O taste and see that the Lord is good: Blessed is the man that trusteth in him;" Ps. xxxiv. 4—8. "In the day when I cried, thou answeredst me: and didst strengthen me with strength in my soul;" Ps. cxxxviii. 3.

IV. Get a greater degree of weanedness from the flesh, and from all the delights and satisfactions that belong to this mortal life: Then as you will not feel so great a pain in being stripped of them, so neither will your soul be filled with terror, when you are in danger of losing them. Learn to put off a little of that sinful tenderness for self, which we brought into the world with us. One of the first lessons in the school of Christ, is self-denial; Mat. xvi. 24. If any man will come after me, that is, be my disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

It is a certain tender fondness for our flesh that makes us afraid of pain. It is a fondness for our name and reputation that makes us afraid of reproaches. It is a fondness for our possessions, and our easy circumstances in the world that makes us afraid of poverty: And too great a fondness for life makes us afraid of dying. Whensoever therefore the cause of Christ plainly calls us to risk our name and honour in the world, to part with our wealth or our ease, and to venture and to expose life itself, we shrink from the command; slavish and sinful fear prevails mightily upon us, because we love earth, and self, and flesh better than we ought to do. We must subdue this self-love, and

unmanly softness, if we would approve ourselves as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, and gain a spirit of sacred courage and resolution. We must be dead to the things of flesh and sense, and gain a victory over the complaints and groanings of nature. We must go as far as we can toward parting with right-hands, and right-eyes, in every sense of the words, if we would be christians indeed.

V. Endeavour to keep yourselves always employed in some proper work, that your fears may be diverted when they cannot immediately be overcome. If our thoughts and hands are idle and empty we lie open to the invasion and tumult of our fears, and we give them leave to assault us on all sides.

The passion and principle of this slavish fear, is mingled with our flesh and blood, and therefore we must employ even our flesh and blood in some better business, that we may turn the current of animal nature, and leave the imagination no leisure to sit brooding over its own terrors. Want of occupation and engagement of the powers of nature, exposes the mind of man to the inroad of all the frightful images, that fancy can furnish out, and to all the terrifying suggestions of a watchful and malicious tempter. That wicked spirit has some strange and unknown methods of access to our souls: He will worry the sheep of Christ with terrors, when he is not suffered to devour or destroy them; and an unbusied mind is prepared to admit his worst temptations.

But while I am pressing you to find out some employment for yourselves, take care that it be such as may approve itself to God and your own consciences. We must be ever found in the way of duty, as I hinted before, if we would support a holy courage. It is only the righteous that has just reason to be bold as a lion. Be ready to meet Christ the judge, and his glorious appearance at all times, and then you need not fear all that earth or hell can do against you.

[If this Sermon be too long, it may be divided here.]

Let us proceed now to propose some further remedies against this slavish passion of fear

VI. Keep your eye fixed on the hand of God in all the affairs of men. View his powerful and over-ruling providence in all things, even in those things that awaken your most troublesome fears. Think with yourselves, that you put creatures in the place of God, if you fear them more than God, as though they were the sovereign lords and disposers of all your comforts. Learn to see God in all things, and behold him in all things as your God, and then creatures will have but little influence to

awaken any of the passions of the soul, or to raise distressing fears within you.

Are your spirits so weak, that thunder and lightning, and the storms of the air affright you? Think who it is that commands the tempests to arise, and quashes the storms at his pleasure. In whose hand is the thunder? Who kindles the lightning? Who directs the flashes, and guides every sweeping blast of wind or fire to its appointed place? Remember the disciples in the midst of the storm, and the language of Jesus walking upon the water, *It is I, be not afraid;* Mat. xiv. 27.

Or if the public commotions of the world awaken your fears, read the name and presence of God, even your God, in the xlvi. Psalm, and rejoice and stand firm amidst the tumult and shaking of the nations. *God is our refuge and strength, a very present help, in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be cast into the midst of the sea,* verses 2, 3. *The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: He uttered his voice, the earth melted;* verse 6. *The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge;* verse 11. *Selah**.

Or perhaps more particular and personal dangers and afflictions threaten your good name, your estate, your flesh, your life. Well, the name of God in his presence is an universal spring of comfort and courage, a wide spreading shield against every mischief.

Are you terrified at the thoughts of personal reproach and slander, know that the tongues of men are within the reach of the hand of God, and he can cast a bridle of restraint upon them, but if he take off that restraint, and leave them to their own perverseness and rage, learn to say as good David, when Shimei cursed him; the hand of the Lord is in it, God hath given him a loose to curse me: And thus sweetly compose yourselves to an acquiescence in the providential will of your heavenly Father.

Is poverty and want the thing you dread? But is not God your heavenly Father? And can you not trust him to provide for his children? Will he give the young ravens their food, when they cry, and will he not feed his sons and his daughters? It is true you may be reduced to bread and water, and brought down to the very lowest circumstances, and you must

* That is an excellent treatise which Mr. Flavel has published against sinful fear, especially in times of public danger and persecution: And his little book of keeping the heart, has some valuable chapters in it, containing rich preservatives against this weakness of the mind.

submit to his will: God will feed your nature, though he will not feed your pride.

Are you affrighted at the thoughts of sickness and pain? Remember diseases are the servants of our Lord Christ, he can bid pains and anguish of body go or come as he pleases; nor can they seize you without his commission, nor tarry with you beyond his appointed moment. Commit your flesh to him as well as your spirit: He is a wise physician, and he will deal tenderly with you: He has worn flesh and blood, and has a sympathising heart, nor will he grieve his own members beyond what his wisdom and his love sees needful.

Are you afraid of persecuting enemies, that hunt you from place to place, and would pursue you even to the death? Remember that they are but the slaves of Satan, and they and their master are all in a chain, under the sovereign dominion of Christ your Lord. The wicked of the earth, in this sense, are called the hand of God; Ps. xvii. 14. They are but as instruments to execute his divine purposes, and they cannot move nor act beyond his permission. He put a hook in the nostrils of Sennacherib, that Assyrian wild beast, and a bridle into his jaws; he suffered him to come and gaze at Jerusalem, then in one night the angel of death destroyed all his army, and the Lord put a song of triumph into the mouth of his people.

In a time of persecution in the last century, some pious ministers were met together, expressing their mutual fears, and consulting how to provide for their own safety: When one stood up in the spirit of faith, and said, *We are all immortal till our work is done;* whereby he declared his lively sense of the restraining power of God over the malice of men, and his assurance that God would preserve them in life, so long as he had any service to employ them in. This was in truth a sublime thought: A Roman orator or a Greek poet would have been admired and celebrated for it by all the critics: This was the language of faith, and it had a sublime and glorious effect, it dispersed their fears at once, and they went away rejoicing.

VII. Recollect your own experiences of the goodness of God in carrying you through former seasons of danger and sorrow. *I will remember*, says David, *the works of the Lord, and his wonders of old;* Ps. lxxvii. 11. I will remember the special deliverances I have obtained in times of most imminent peril. Think with yourselves how high the tempest of your fears has sometimes risen, and God has sunk them at once into silence. Think how extreme your danger has been, when you have been perplexed in a wilderness of thorns, and have seen no way for your escape, but the eye of God hath found a path of safety for

you, a path which the eagle's eye hath not seen: He has led you as one that was blind, by the way that you knew not, he has made darkness light before you, and crooked things straight, according to his promise; Is. xlii. 16.

And remember also, that sometimes when the very evil which you feared has fallen upon you, it has not been half so heavy and painful as your fears have represented it, and you have been enabled to bear that which you thought was intolerable. Remember the years of ancient time, and rejoice in that God who has often disappointed your fears of destruction, and has outdone all your hopes in a way of deliverance. *I said, I am cut off from the earth, and shall go to the gates of the grave: I reckoned from night till the morning that he will cut me off with pining sickness, from day even to night, he will make an end of me: But in love to my soul, O Lord, thou hast delivered it from the pit of corruption, for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back.* Perhaps your own experience may teach you to sing this song of Hezekiah, as it is recorded; Is. xxxviii. 10—17. or to join with holy David, and repeat his hymns of praise. And thus, beside your own experiences you may review the happy experiences of the saints of old, or of christians in later times, and encourage your faith in opposition to all your fears.

VIII. Charge your conscience solemnly with the authority of the divine command to suppress your fears. Remember that the exercises of faith, courage, and holy firmness of soul, are duties as well as blessings. Read how often the great God forbids his people to indulge their fears; Is. xl. 10—13, 14. xliii. 1—5. xliv. 2—8. Fear not, is a command perpetually repeated, because God well knew how prone our feeble natures are to be affrighted at every appearance of danger: And even when he calls his people Jacob a *worm*, and confesses the extreme weakness of their nature under that emblem, yet he insists on the same precept still, *Fear not thou worm Jacob;* Is. xli. 14.

Our blessed Lord joins frequently in the same prohibition of a slavish fear; Mat. x. 28. *Fear not them which can kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but fear him rather, who can destroy body and soul in hell.* And Peter, who once wanted courage, and denied his Lord, in his elder and better days, grew bolder for the name of Christ, and he forbids us *to be afraid or troubled at the terror of men;* 1 Pet. iii. 13. He repeats the charge of the prophet Isaiah, *sanctify the Lord of hosts in your heart;* Is. viii. 13. the Lord of hosts alone is the proper object of our supreme fear. This will over-rule and abolish all other fears, as the little noises of earth are lost in the thunders of heaven. The fear of God in a sublime degree will be an effectual cure of our sinful fear of creatures.

It is true, the principal of fear is a natural affection, it is rooted in flesh and blood, it grows high and domineers, especially in some constitutions, and when the natural spirits are enfeebled, it still gains the greater ascendancy over us: But if it be indulged and encouraged, it soon becomes sinful, for it seems to stand opposite to the grace of faith, and too often prevails over it. Therefore Christ chides his disciples, when they were affrighted in the storm while he was in the ship? *Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?* Mark iv. 40. And even when Peter was walking upon the water, and Christ was near him, he saith, *O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?* Mat. xiv. 31. For a christian to give himself up to the wild tyranny of his fears, is contrary to the very spirit and design of the gospel of Christ; Rom. viii. 15. "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage to fear, but the spirit of adoption. The spirit of power and love; 2 Tim. i. 7. Remember then you are the sons and daughters of God: It is below the dignity of your character to yield to this slavery, and your Father himself reproves, and your Redeemer forbids it.

IX. Think of the many advantages that arise from a holy fortitude of spirit in the midst of dangers. This divine temper of mind will establish your feet on a rock in the midst of storms, it will animate you to practise every duty, and to prevent many of the mischiefs you fear. This will preserve the soul in a sacred serenity and calmness under all the gloomy and painful events of providence. Without this firmness of spirit you can never practise what Christ commands his disciples, and that is, *to possess their souls in patience in the hour of their distress;* Luke xxi. 19. But we may keep up the government of ourselves by a holy fortitude and calm submission to the will of God. This will make sorrows lighter, and the heaviest afflictions become more tolerable.

Whereas, if we give a loose to fear, it throws the whole frame of nature into a tumultuous hurry and confusion, it takes away the use of prudence to contrive the proper means for our escape, it cuts the sinews of our most active powers, and enfeebles our whole nature, so that we become an easy prey to every adversary. The more we are affrighted, the less able are we to defend ourselves.

Fear is a dreadful bondage of the soul, and it holds the man in chains: Therefore in the text just now cited, the spirit of fear is called a spirit of bondage. It is this that brings the soul down to taste the bitterness, and to feel the smart of those very evils which affright us at a distance, and which perhaps never come near us. Those very sufferings which are prevented by the mercy

of God, we endure them in our thoughts, and feel the pain of them by an indulgence of an excessive fear. We suffer an affliction once, if we are overwhelmed with the terror of it: And if at last it does really overtake us, we double the suffering, and make the pain the longer. Oftentimes in cases of bodily distempers, the fear itself brings the disease, and aggravates all the symptoms. If we could read the records of the grave, we should find that many a person has been oppressed, and sunk down to death, by the excessive fear of dying.

The last remedy of fear which I shall mention, is this, suppose the worst that can come, and be calmly prepared for it: This will be a mighty relief against the tyranny of our fears.

You are afraid of losing your honour among men, afraid to bear the scourge of their tongues, and bitter reproaches. But think with yourselves, when slander and falsehood have done their worst, it is but the wind of the breath of man, and this cannot hurt your best interest, while you stand approved of God. Infamy amongst men is but a trifling evil if compared with praise honour and glory among the saints before the throne, and the applause of Jesus and his angels at the last great day.

You are frighted with the hideous appearance of poverty, because scorn attends it as well as want. But our blessed Lord had not where to lay his head; he was fed by the bounty of kind friends and pious women, who ministered to him of their substance. The great and the wise, the rich and the learned of that day, made him their mockery: The very finger of scorn pointed at him in the streets: And why should the disciple think it necessary that he should be above his Lord. Ye may be *poor in this world, and at the same time rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom*; James ii. 5.

You are afraid of sickness and pains of the flesh, and your life becomes a burden to you, by reason of your constant dread of some infectious distempers. You shift your dwellings, you hide yourselves at home, and yet you enjoy no peace. Suppose the distemper should seize you, has not sickness often brought your soul nearer to God? And if your outward man has decayed, your inward man and your best interest have had a rich advancement thereby.

You are terrified at the threatenings of bloody men. It must be granted, that flesh has a strong empire over the soul where dangers of torment and death appear. But suppose men of violence kill the body, then you will be dismissed at once from all their fury, and from your own fears. Their terror cannot reach beyond the grave; that is a safe and peaceful hiding-place.

But perhaps you are frighted at the thoughts of dying, even

in the common way of nature: It may be, the king of terrors dresses himself in formidable airs, and shakes your very frame: But would you live here on earth for ever? A christian who has hopes and interests, and possessions beyond the regions of time and sense, should not be afraid to enter upon them. Remember that death itself, even in its most formidable appearance, is ordained of God to open the door of heaven for you, and let your souls into the joy of eternal life: The grace of your Redeemer, and the epistle of St. Paul, join to teach you this song, *O death, where is thy sting?* And *O grave, where is thy victory?* 1 Cor. xv. 55.

Thus, by keeping your soul in a ready preparation for the worst events that your fear can imagine, you overcome this tyrant of the soul, and triumph over this slavish passion! Thus you transform your very terrors into joys, and gather honey out of the lion, as Samson did. The more fatal your dangers are, the nearer is your final deliverance. Say to yourself, Is my feeble flesh tottering into the grave? Then my soul is so much nearer to the gates of glory. This is the holy skill of turning evil into good. Such a faith, kept in lively exercise can make roses spring out of the midst of thorns, and change the briars of the wilderness into the fruit-trees of paradise. O what a state of divine and sacred peace does that christian enjoy, who can look stedfastly upon the face of danger, in its most frightful forms, and say through grace, I am prepared! *Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for my God is with me,* and he will be with me for ever.

Recollection.—What progress hast thou made, O my soul, in acquiring this sacred fortitude? The former discourse has taught thee the necessity of it, and the various occasions for the exercise of it in the course of the christian life. In this latter sermon thou hast heard the motives that should awaken all thy powers to obtain and practise it, and thou hast been informed what are some of the most sovereign remedies against thy foolish and sinful fears. Methinks I feel the want of this holy hardiness of soul, to walk through the midst of temptations unmoved, unterrified, and undefiled. My virtue and my religion have too often suffered by the prevailing power of a slavish fear: my conscience has lost its innocence and peace by too many sinful compliances. What shall I do to harden my spirit all over, that temptation and slavish fear may not find a place to enter.

For this end I review the glorious motives set before me. For this end I look to the noble army of martyrs, to the blessed society of the apostles, to the cloud of witnesses which have trod the same path before me, who have borne an undaunted testimony

to the same religion which I profess. I would chide and shame myself out of my sinful cowardice, while I behold their illustrious examples of zeal. But above all I fix my eye upon Jesus, the divine author of this religion, *the Author and Finisher of my faith;* Heb. xii. 2. I would learn of the *Captain of my salvation, who was made perfect through sufferings;* Heb. ii. 10. I would learn of my divine Teacher, to endure hardships like a good soldier of Christ, while I fight under his banner, against those very enemies that he hath subdued.

Consider, my soul, what thou art: What is thy character and profession: If thou art a christian indeed, thou hast taken up arms against sin and Satan, and a world that is in rebellion against God: And shall the frown of a man make thee drop thy weapons, and discourage thee from the glorious service? Thou hast many rich encouragements to expect divine assistance: Many joyful assurances of victory are given to them that endure in the day of conflict, and a glorious crown stands ready for those that overcome O may the crown of glory sparkle in my eye, and grow brighter and larger by a nearer view, and a perpetual contemplation of it! Make me forgetful of ease and health, O my God, and of all my mortal interests, while I press forward with sacred courage to lay hold on this crown! Blessed Saviour, make me triumph over every difficulty, till death the last of all my enemies, be subdued, and I have obtained the glorious prize.

I would shake myself out of my fears, and awaken my zeal by such motives as these. And O that I could treasure up in my memory the various remedies of which I have heard this day, to heal this infirmity of my nature, and to overcome these foolish and sinful terrors of spirit! I will review my faith, and the grounds of my hope, that I may know that I am a christian indeed, that I am one of the sheep of Christ, and under his divine care; and I would watch against every temptation, lest I contract a new guilt and defilement, and thereby darken my evidence and awaken my fears. I would survey with pleasure the gracious words of promise, which are scattered up and down in the book of God. O may the blessed Spirit print many of them on my heart, that they may be always present with me, and that I may find them within my reach, and ready at hand as a special cordial in every fainting hour! I would run to them as my sure refuge in every season of danger and conflict, and be animated to confront a sinful world.

Give, me, O my God, give me the spirit of prayer, and let me keep ever near to the throne of grace, that my soul may not come thither as a stranger, but that in every surprize I may address thee as a God near at hand, and that in the name of my

reat High-priest, Jesus the Son of God, I may find grace ready to help me in the time of need.

Wean me, O Lord, from all the delights and hopes of flesh nd sense? Mortify me to all the humours and joys of a perishing life, and a vain world. Arm my soul all over with a religious hardiness, that I may venture into the field of battle, and may scarce feel the wounds which I receive in thy cause. Give me the happy skill of diverting my fears, when I cannot at once subdue them, and lead me into proper employments of my heart and hand for this purpose.

I would live as under the eye of God. I would take notice of his hand in all the affairs of life, and all the dangers that attend me. I would learn of Moses to endure the sight of afflictions, as seeing him who is invisible. Let me hear thy voice, O Jesus, my Saviour, let me hear thy voice walking upon the waters; when I am tossed about upon the waves of distress and difficulty, speak to my soul, and say, It is I, be not afraid.

Surely I have had some experience of the Divine Presence with me in the midst of dangers: God has sometimes disappointed all my fears, and interposed his shield of power and love for my defence: Why should not I trust a faithful God, and that infinite goodness which I have already tasted of? I charge my conscience with the authority of thy word. O Lord, when thou forbiddest all my sinful fears, I would renounce them too, I would struggle to break these painful fetters, and fight against this inward slavery of the soul, these domestic tyrants. O that the spirit of power were always with me, to dispel the spirit of bondage.

I would be bravely prepared for the worst of sufferings, to which my circumstances in this life may expose me. I would be ready to meet contempt and scandal, poverty, sickness, and death itself. Jesus can support me in the heaviest distresses, though all the sorrows I fear should come upon me. He can bear me on the wings of faith and hope, high above all the turmoils and disquietudes of life: He can carry me through the shadow of the dark valley, and scatter all the terrors of it. Give me, O Lord, these wings of faith and hope, and bear me upon them through all the remains of my short journey in the wilderness: Make me active and zealous in thy cause while I live, and convey me safely above the reach of fear, through the valley of death, to the inheritance prepared for me in the land of light. Then my fears shall cease for ever, for enemies and dangers are not known in that land. There all our conflicts shall be changed into everlasting triumphs, while songs of honour and salvation ascend in a full choir to the grace that has made us overcomers. *Amen.*

HYMN FOR SERMON XXXII.

Holy Fortitude, or Remedies against Fear.

WHEN tumults of unruly fear
Rise in my heart, and riot there,
What shall I do to calm my breast,
And get the vexing foe suppress?

What power can these wild thoughts control.
This ruffling tempest of the soul?
Where shall I fly in this distress,
But to the throne of glorious grace?

My faith would seize some promise, Lord;
There's power and safety in thy word:
Not all that earth or hell can say,
Shall tempt or drive my soul away.

I call the days of old to mind,
When I have found my God was kind;
My heavenly Friend is still the same;
Salvation to his holy name.

Great God, preserve my conscience clean;
Wash me from guilt, forgive my sin:
Thy love shall guard me from surprise,
Though threat'ning dangers round me rise.

When fear like a wild ocean raves,
Let Jesus walk upon the waves,
And say, "'tis I;" that heavenly voice
Shall sink the storm, and raise my joys.

SERMON XXXIII.

The Universal Rule of Equity.

i. 12.—All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them; for this is the law and the prophets.

IEN our blessed Lord took upon him the public office of a et or teacher amongst men, he found it was not only neces- instruct them in the sacred mysteries of religion, and in- hem of their duty to God his Father, and to himself; but ployed much of his ministry also, to teach them the prac- social virtue, and how they should behave toward their -creatures. In the heathen world the rules of morality lost in a great measure, as well as the rules of piety and ip; and the Jews, the peculiar people of God, had grossly ted both the one and the other. As our Saviour refined actice of religion towards God, and raised it by his gospel, igh and heavenly degree, beyond what mortals had known , so he explained and established the rules of moral virtue, nore glorious and convincing manner than the world had acquainted with.

Read his life, and observe how often he takes occasion in the l seasons of his preaching, to give particular directions r conduct toward our neighbours. But after all, he knew he nature of man was corrupt, his passions strong, his ry frail, and that he would be ready to neglect, or for- is various sacred precepts, when there was most need actise them; and therefore he thought it proper to give hort and comprehensive rule of equity to regulate all our ct, that should be written as it were in our very souls: And contained in the words of my text, *whatsoever ye would men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them; for this is w and the prophets.*

To dilate a little upon this subject, and refresh a living of it upon your memories and your consciences, I shall this method, and enquire,

I. What is the true meaning of this divine rule.—II. What special argument that our Lord uses in order to enforce it. Wherein the particular excellencies of it appear.—IV. I conclude with some reflections on this subject.

First, What is the true meaning of this rule?

In order to understand this rule aright, we must consider what it does not require, as well as what it does: For on the one side, some selfish necessitous and unreasonable persons may expect more from us than this rule obliges us to perform: And on the other side, a timorous and weak conscience may perhaps be led into a mistake, and think itself bound by this rule to perform some instances of kindness to others, which are utterly unreasonable and unrequired, and which might be injurious on other accounts to ourselves, or to our families, or to the rest of mankind.

We must remember then, that this rule does not mean to oblige us to give all that to another, or do all that for another, which we could possibly desire or wish to be bestowed upon us, or done for us; but whatsoever we could reasonably desire, and justly expect another should do to us, that we ought to do to him when he is in the like circumstances. All that in our calm and sedate thoughts we judge fit and proper another should do for us, that we should practise and do for him. Such requests as we could make to others, and could justify them to ourselves in our own consciences, according to the principles of humanity, the rules of civil society, and the rights of mankind, such we ought not to deny to others when they stand in need. Not all that a fond self-love would prompt us to ask, but all that our conscience tells us we might with reason expect.

I shall mention an instance or two, which will more fully explain what I mean.

A criminal under righteous condemnation for murder or robbery, may think thus with himself, *Surely I would pardon the judge or the prince, if he were in my circumstances, therefore he ought to pardon me;* Or the judge himself might think, *I should be glad to be pardoned or not condemned if I were in the case of this criminal, therefore I will not condemn him.* This sort of thoughts arising from unreasonable and unjust principles, either of a sinful self-love, or indulgence to iniquity, are not to be the measure of our actions nor expectations; these are not just and reasonable desires, nor can our own conscience in our sedate and calm enquiries judge so concerning them.

Again, if we were poor and starving, it may be we would be glad if our rich neighbour would settle upon us a competent estate sufficient to maintain us for the term of our lives; but this we cannot reasonably expect, or reasonably desire and demand; therefore we are not bound, be our circumstances never so large, to settle such a competency upon our poor neighbours, be their circumstances never so mean. We cannot rationally expect these things should be done unto us, we cannot equitably desire

them of another, therefore we are not bound to do thus to another.

But if we are placed as criminals at the bar of judgment, we may reasonably expect that all the favourable circumstances which attend our accusation, should be well weighed, and all the kind allowances made, which the nature of the charge or crime will admit; for our consciences would think it reasonable to allow so much to any criminal, if we ourselves were placed in the chair of magistracy. Or if we, through the frowns of providence, are poor and starving, we may reasonably expect our rich neighbour should bestow upon us a little of his bread, a little of his clothing, to supply our extreme necessities now and then; and thus much our neighbour may expect from us, when he is fallen into decay by the providence of God, while our circumstances are large, and we are well furnished for such bounty.

Thus you see the true intent and meaning of this universal law of equity, viz. That we practise toward our neighbour in such a manner as our own hearts and consciences would think it reasonable he should practise towards us in the like case.

The *Second* enquiry was this. What special argument doth our Lord use to enforce the observance of this sacred precept?

When our Saviour had laid down this general rule, he adds, "This is the law and the prophets;" that is, this is the summary of all the rules of duty, which are written in the law of Moses, concerning our carriage to our neighbour, and of all the laws which are explained by the succeeding prophets, and sacred writers under the Old Testament. They are all comprehended in this short line; *Do to others, as you would have others do to you.* It is very nearly the same thing, in other words with the law of Moses, *Love thy neighbour as thyself;* Lev. xix. 18. but it is much plainer and more intelligible: And indeed this rule of Moses is to be understood and interpreted, and applied in practice according to this plainer rule of Christ, thus, "Let thy love to thy neighbour be as great as thou canst reasonably expect or desire thy neighbour's love should be to thyself."

When our blessed Lord gives an abridgment or abstract of the ten commandments, he doth it in these words; *Mat.* xxii. 37, 38, 39. *Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and soul, that is, love God above all things: this is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it; love thy neighbour as thyself*; that is, consider him as a piece of human nature, as a second self, and imitate thy love to thyself in thy conduct toward him: Or, according to my text, it may be explained thus; enquire of thy own heart how thou wouldst have him love thee, and let this be the rule and measure of thy love to him. All our duties to God or man, all the commands of the first and the second table,

all the dictates of the law and prophets depend on these two commandments.

Then we answer the design of the law, then we obey the prophets, then we fulfil the commands of Moses, and of Christ, when we give to God our supreme love, and when we put ourselves in the room of our neighbour, and then carry it toward him, according to the love we expect he should bear us. This is *loving our neighbours as ourselves*, and this *love is the fulfilling of the law*; Rom. xiii. 10. When our Saviour delivers the words of my text, it is as if he had said to us, "If ye would practise all the duties that you owe to your fellow-creatures, and fulfil all the laws of the second table, in the most compendious and perfect manner, remember and practise this one general direction, deal with the rest of mankind as your conscience judges they should deal with you." But this leads me to the

Third enquiry, *viz.* wherein do the peculiar excellencies of this rule appear:

This golden rule hath many excellent properties belonging to it. I shall mention a few on purpose to impress it on your consciences with more conviction, pleasure and power.

1. It is a rule that is easy to be understood, and as easy to be applied by the meanest and weakest understanding. It is so plain, that what is said by Isaiah concerning all the precepts of the gospel, is more eminently true of this; *it is a highway of holiness, and the wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein:*

It is of admirable use, to solve a thousand cases of conscience that may arise on the sudden, and may perplex our minds with difficulty. "It lies ready," says a considerable author, "for present use upon all exigencies and occasions. We can scarce be so far surprized by an immediate necessity of acting as not to have time for a short recourse to this rule, or room for a sudden glance, as it were, upon it in our minds, where it rests and sparkles always like the urim and thummim on the breast of Aaron."

If we have no written cases of conscience, no books at hand to direct our practice, if we have no faithful minister near us, no wise and pious friend to consult on a sudden occasion, this one rule, written in the heart, may serve instead of all other helps. This blessed precept strikes a sudden and sacred light into the mind, where the case may seem intricate: It shines upon our way, and makes our path plain, where an honest and scrupulous conscience might be just before bewildered in the dark, and not know how to act. "Practise that, O man! toward thy neighbour, which thou art convinced thy neighbour should practise toward thee."

III. This excellent precept of Christ, carries greater evidence to the conscience, and a stronger degree of conviction in it, than any other rule of moral virtue. As I said before, that a little reason will serve to apply it, so I say now, there is not much need of reasoning to find it out; for we fetch the proof of it from within ourselves, even from our own inward sensation and feeling. If we would know what is just and equitable to do to our neighbour, we need but ask our own inward sense, and our conscience together, what we would think equitable and just to receive from him? Thus there is but one and the same measure of justice, by which we must mete it out to ourselves and others; and that measure lies within us, even in the heart. We are very sensible of benefits and injuries that we ourselves receive, and this very sense of injuries and benefits, is, as it were, transcribed into our conscience, from the tenderest part of our own souls, and becomes there a rule of equity, how we should treat our neighbours.

It is a most righteous precept of the ancient Jewish law, and of universal obligation; Deut. xxv. 13, 14, 15. *Thou shalt not have in thy bag, or in thine house, divers weights, and divers measures; a great and a small: That is, one wherewith to buy, and another wherewith to sell; but thou shalt have a perfect and just weight; a perfect and just measure shalt thou have.* This precept as soon as it is mentioned, strikes the conscience with conviction of the justice of it: And what is said here of traffic and dealing, holds as truly of the general commerce between man and man, in all the ordinary and extraordinary affairs of life: That mutual exchange of

good offices, whereby society is upheld, must be regulated in the same manner, and by the same rule; and the immediate conviction of the equity of it, doth as strongly strike the conscience. There must be a perfect weight, and a just measure, saith the author before-cited, by which all men are mutually obliged to regulate their conduct, in acting and suffering, in commanding and obeying, in giving and receiving: and this can be no other than the equal and righteous rule of the text; the doing in all cases and to all persons, even as we would be done unto. There is no one so absurd and unreasonable, as not to see, and acknowledge the absolute equity of this command in the theory, however he may swerve and decline from it in his practice." For, it is founded not only in the reason of things, and in the common share, and equal interest that we all have in human nature; but it is also written in the most sensible and the tenderest part of our constitution; and from thence it is derived to the mind and judgment, as a law of behaviour towards our fellow-creatures.

IV. Hence it comes to pass, that it is a precept particularly fitted for practice, because it includes in it a powerful motive to stir us up to do what he enjoins. This character of it, I borrow from the same author, who talks thus upon it: "Other moral maxims propose naked truths to the understanding, which operate often but faintly and slowly on the will and passions, the two active principles of the mind of man: But it is the peculiar character of this rule, that it addresseth itself equally to all these powers, even to the passions, and the will, as well as the understanding. It not only directs, but influences; it imparts both light and heat; and at the same time that it informs us clearly what we are to do, excites us also in the most tender moving manner, to the performance of it; for in truth, its seat is not more in the brain, than in the heart of man: It appeals to our very senses themselves, and exerts its secret force in so prevailing a way, that it is even felt as well as understood by us."

"There is nothing that we know, that gives a man so true and lively a sense of the sufferings of others, or restrains him so powerfully from doing unrighteous and oppressive things, as his having smarted formerly himself under the experience of them. Now the supposing another man's ill usage to be our own; is the giving ourselves a present sense, as it were, and a kind of feigned experience of it; which doth, for the time serve all the purposes of a true one."

V. It is such a rule, as if well applied, will almost always secure our neighbour from injury, and secure us from guilt, if we should chance to hurt him. God will not impute guilt to us, if we should happen to mistake in a point of doubtful en-

quiry, and to hurt our neighbour by a conscientious obedience to this rule.

I say, it will almost always secure us from injuring our neighbour, I cannot say, it is always an absolute, infallible, and certain rule of right and wrong; for our knowledge of the eternal rules of right and wrong is but imperfect; neither our own heads or hearts, are furnished with all the various and particular principles of equity. A mere enquiry into our own hearts or consciences, can never give us a perfect knowledge of the abstracted rules of justice: Nor can it determine us to the certain practice of it, in all the most intricate cases, unless these perfect rules of justice were fully written in the heart of every man. But under the present circumstances of mankind, in this poor, ignorant, and corrupt state of human nature, it appears to be the best, the most righteous, the most secure, and the most universal rule that ever could be invented or given to men; for it will certainly secure and prevent every man from injuring his neighbour in all cases, except where he himself is willing and content to receive equal injury: And I am sure, self-love will tell us, that these cases are exceeding few.

It is evident therefore, that an honest man will scarce ever mistake in keeping close to this rule. And if I should then happen to do an injury to my neighbour, instead of strict equity, yet I can appeal to God, and say, I endeavoured to apply this rule to my conscience, in the present circumstances, with the utmost sincerity. I acted no otherwise to my neighbour, than I desired or judged it reasonable for my neighbour, to act towards me in the like case. And surely my unavoidable mistake will not be imputed to me as a crime, where I have honestly followed the rule my Saviour has given me, and acted therein according to the best capacity of my judgment.

VI. It is a rule as much fitted to awaken us to sincere repentance upon the transgression of it, as it is to direct us to our present duty. This rule abides in the bosom of a christian, it dwells so near him, that it is, as it were, mingled with conscience itself; and by this means it becomes not only a safe guide, but a sharp reprover too: It soon puts us in mind where either inclination or practice warps toward injustice and deceit. Have we never felt our conscience sting us with a bitter reflection derived from this rule, when we have neglected in any instance to fulfil our duty to our neighbour? I am sure if we kept it much in view, we could neither practise injustice with ease of mind, nor dwell long under this guilt, without some inward reproaches: If the precept had not power enough to restrain us from present sin, yet it would spur us on to serious and speedy repentance.

[Here the sermon may be divided, if it be too long to be read in a family at once.]

VII. It is a most extensive rule, with regard to all the stations, ranks and characters of mankind : for it is perfectly suited to them all : And I think it may be said, that it is equally useful to the rich and the poor, to the buyer and the seller, to the prince and to the peasant, to the master and the servant : They all come under the single rule of duty and justice : This should govern them in all their conduct. Be your condition, O christians, what it will in the world, do but put yourselves into the circumstances of one another, in your own thoughts, for a moment, and ask what is reasonable to be done to yourselves ? And your consciences will return a speedy and easy answer what you should do to others.

Let the tenant say, " If I were a landlord, what should I think reasonable that my tenant should pay me ?" And the landlord should ask himself, " Were I tenant, what should I claim of my landlord ?" I would have the master enquire, " What should I expect, if I were a servant, at the hand of my master ?" And let the servant say, " What, if I were a master, should I expect from the hands of one that served me ?" Parents should ask themselves, " if I had been a negligent child, and guilty of some trifling offence, could I think it just my father should be in such a passion with me ?" And the son should enquire, " if I were a father, would I not think it reasonable my child should obey me in such particular instances or commands ?" Thus the landlord and tenant, thus the master and servant, thus the father and the son may come to an adjustment of their mutual obligations.

The merchant should say to himself, " if I were an artificer, should I think it reasonable that the labour of my hands, and the sweat of my brows, should be screwed down to so cheap a price ?" The seller of goods should say, " If I were the buyer, would I think it just to have such corrupt or faulty wares put into my hands ? Am I willing to have my necessity, my ignorance, or unwariness thus imposed upon ?" And the buyer should ask himself, " If I were the seller, should I bear to have my goods thus run down and depreciated below the just value ?"

The learned professions may also learn their duty from this rule. The lawyer should say to himself, " What if I were the client should I think it equitable to have my cause so long delayed, by so many shiftings and escapes, from a determination ?" The physicians and the surgeons should put themselves in the places of their sick and wounded patients, and say, " Do we prescribe never a potion, or use never a plaister more than we would think proper for ourselves, if we were languishing under the same sickness or wounds ? Do we take the same safe and speedy methods

of relief for others that we would have applied to ourselves?" And the preachers of the gospel should place themselves in the room of their hearers, and say, "Do we labour in our closets, in our secret hours of retirement, and in our public ministrations, for the conversion and salvation of those who hear us, as we would have ministers do for us, if we were perishing in our sins, and in danger of eternal death? Do we take such pains to awaken the slumberers upon the borders of hell, as we ourselves would have others take, in order to awaken us out of such fatal slumbers? Do we study and contrive with what divine cordials we shall refresh and comfort the mourners in Zion, even as we should desire to be comforted and refreshed?" Such sort of self-enquiries as these, will lead us to the practice of our present duty, and solve many a difficult case of conscience better than turning over the largest volumes.

VIII. This sacred rule is a most comprehensive one, with regard to all the actions and duties that concern our neighbours. It is not confined merely to the practice of justice, but it extends much wider and farther: It is of mighty influence in the direction and practice of meekness, of patience, of charity, of truth and faithfulness, and every kind of social virtue, and a most happy guard against every social vice. It would be endless to enter into all the special cases of vice and virtue, which relate to the social life, and to shew how much they are affected by this rule, and what divine advantages we may attain for the practice of morality, by keeping this one sentence ever upon our thoughts. Yet I cannot pass over so important a theme, without giving a short specimen of some of these advantages.

This golden precept would teach us how to regulate our temper and general behaviour in the world. Am I not willing to be treated in an affable and civil manner by those who converse with me? Let me treat others then with all becoming civility, and make it appear that christianity is a religion of true honour, and that a christian is indeed a well-bred man. Do I think it unreasonable that my neighbour, though he be my superior, should assume haughty airs and disdain me? Let me watch therefore against all such scornful speeches and disdainful airs, when I converse with one, who is inferior to me. Do I think it a grievous thing, that a man should break out into sudden passion against me, if I happen to speak a word contrary to his sentiment, or to set himself in a rage for a trifle? Let me set a strict guard then over all my passionate powers, and learn to bear opposition without impatience. Let me quench the first risings of sudden anger, lest they kindle into an ungoverned flame, and hurry me on to the practice of what I condemn in others.

This excellent rule would teach us tenderness and beneficence to those that are unhappy. We should never make a jest of the lame or the blind, the crooked or the deformed: we should never ridicule the natural infirmities of the meanest of our fellow-creatures, nor their providential disadvantages, if we did but put ourselves in the room of the blind and lame, the deformed and the poor, and ask whether we should think it just and reasonable to be made the mockery and the jest of those that behold us. We should certainly be inclined to visit the sick, and feed the hungry, to give drink to him that is a-thirst, and to secure the feeble and helpless from the oppression of the mighty, if we enquired of our own hearts, what treatment we should expect if we were hungry and thirsty, if we were sick and helpless.

This blessed command of our Saviour would incline us to reprove with gentleness, to punish with mercy, and never to censure others without a just reason, and a plain call of providence; for we ourselves desire and would reasonably expect this sort of treatment from others. If we carried this sentence always in our memories, should we blaze abroad scandalous reports before we know the truth of them? and publish doubtful suspicions of our neighbour's guilt? Should we blacken his character to the utmost, even where there is a real crime, and make no reasonable allowances for him? Should we perpetually teaze children, servants, or friends with old faults, and make their follies and miscarriages the matter of our delightful conversation? Should we censure every little deviation from the truth, as heresy? Should we pronounce anathemas and curses upon him that leaves out of his creed a few hard words which men have invented, or that differs from us in the business of meats, and days, and ceremonies? We ourselves think it hard to have doubtful reports of evil published concerning us, and suspicions blown up into guilt: We think it hard if our crimes are aggravated to the utmost, and no reasonable allowances are made: We find it very painful to us, and think it unreasonable to be ever teazed with the mention of our former follies, or to have our little differences from another's faith or worship to be pronounced heresy, and to be cut off from the church for it.

In short, if this blessed rule of our Saviour did but more universally obtain, we should never persecute one another for our disagreement in opinion, for we should then learn this lesson, that another has as much right to differ from me in his sentiment, as I have to differ from him. If this rule did but prevail amongst all that own the christian name; then truth, honesty and justice, meekness and love would reign and triumph through all the churches of Christ, and those vile affec-

tions and practices of pride, envy, wrath, cruelty, backbiting, and persecution would be banished for ever from amongst us.

IX. It is not only a rule of equity and love to direct our whole conduct toward our neighbours in the social life, but it is also a rule of the highest prudence with regard to ourselves; and it promotes our own interest in the best manner: For if we make conscience of treating our neighbours according to all the justice and tenderness that this rule will incline us to, we may reasonably expect the same kind and tender treatment from those that are round about us. Such a practice will naturally engage the greatest part of mankind on our side, whensoever we happen to be assaulted or oppressed by the sons of malice or violence. Happy is that person who has gained the love of mankind, by making the love of himself a rule and measure of his actions toward them, and has piously followed that precept of the law of God, *Love thy neighbour as thyself.*

Let us remember that we live in a changeable world, and the scenes of life are continually shifting. I am now a master, and in possession of riches, and if I treat my servant, or any poor man insolently, I may expect the like insolent treatment if my circumstances sink, and reduce me to a state of poverty or service. But if I follow this golden rule of our Saviour, in treating my inferiors, I do, as it were, hoard up for myself a treasure of merit and benevolence amongst men, which I may hope to receive and taste of, in the day of my necessity and distress. Thus in behaving myself toward others according to this holy rule of friendship, I not only please and obey my God and my Saviour, but I happily secure my temporal interests also.

X. In the last place, to mention no more. This rule is fitted to make the whole world as happy as the present state of things will admit. It is not to be described nor conceived what a multitude of blessings and felicities the practice of this single precept would introduce among all mankind.

If we were not thus wrapped up entirely in self, in our own party, or in our own kindred, but could look upon our neighbours as ourselves, and seek their advantage together with our own, every man would become a diffusive blessing amongst his neighbours, and the mutual benefits of mankind would scatter happiness through all the world. In such a beneficent state as this, every man would be, as it were, a good angel to all that came within the reach of his commerce; this earth would be a little image of heaven; and our present social life amongst men would be a foretaste of our future happiness among saints and angels. In those glorious regions, every one rejoices in the welfare of the whole community and they have a double relish of their own per-

sonal blessedness, by the pleasure they take in contributing to the blessedness of all their fellows.

Thus have I given a short and very imperfect account of the excellencies of this sacred rule of equity and love, and named some of the advantages it has above most other precepts of morality. It remains only that I make two or three reflections on so agreeable a subject.

Reflection I. In what a compendious method has our Saviour provided for the practice of all the moral duties enjoined by Moses and the prophets! For he has summed them up in a very few words, and reduced them to one short rule; but the extent and comprehension of it is universal, and almost infinite.—Though we should forget twenty particular precepts of love and righteousness, yet if this be fresh in our thoughts, and always ready at hand, we shall practise all those particular precepts effectually, by the mere influence of this one general rule. It is true, it is a real advantage toward our practice of virtue and justice, to have the mind stored with special precepts, suited particularly to every case; but where the memory is defective, or other rules are not learned, this golden one will do very much towards supplying the place of many. Our Saviour himself grants this truth, when he says; *This is the law and the prophets.*

II. What divine wisdom is manifested in making this golden rule of equity a fundamental law, in the two most famous religions that ever God appointed to the children of men; that is, the Jewish and the christian! *Love thy neighbour as thyself*, was a rule appointed to the Jews; *Lev.* xix. 18. This is repeated by our Saviour; *Mat.* xix. 19. And a happy explication or comment on it given in my text, *Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so unto them; for this is the law and the prophets.* There were none of the heathen philosophers that delivered this as a general law, in so strong, so universal, and so comprehensive a manner as our Saviour has done, though one or two of them offered some occasional hints of the same kind. But our Saviour appoints it as the grand rule of social virtue, amongst all the subjects of his kingdom; and he tells us too, that this is the sum and substance of the directions given by Moses and the prophets for the conduct of men toward their fellow-creatures.

The wisdom of this precept eminently appears herein: Our blessed Lord well knew that self-love would be a powerful temptation to men, to turn them aside from the sacred laws of justice, in treating their neighbours; and therefore he wisely takes this very principle of self-love, and joins it in the consultation with our reason and conscience, how we should carry it toward our

fellow-creatures. Thus by his divine prudence, he constrains even this selfish and rebellious principle to assist our consciences and our rational powers, in directing us how to practise the social duties of life.

It was Christ the Son of God who gave laws to Moses for Israel before his incarnation, and it is he who is come in the flesh, as a preacher of righteousness to men, in these latter days; and in both these seasons of legislature, he has manifested this sacred wisdom: *Ye know the heart of a stranger*, saith the Lord, in his dictates to Moses; Ex. xxiii. 2. *for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt; therefore thou shalt not oppress a stranger.* And he gives us still the same general rule for our conduct; "Look into your own hearts, consider what human nature is, you know you are men of like frailty with others, enquire what treatment you would reasonably expect from your fellows, and be sure you practise in the same manner toward them."

III. Since the wisdom of Christ thought fit to teach us rules of equity and righteousness amongst men, and has, as it were, extracted the very soul and spirit of all social duties, and summed them up in this short sentence: Let not the disciples of Christ forget this rule; nor let the most eminent and exalted christians think it beneath their study and their practice. The love of God and Christ is not the whole of our duty, nor can we be christians indeed, if we neglect to love our neighbour. How vain are all our pretences to faith in Christ, and piety toward God, if we grow careless in our conduct toward men? All our fancied attainments in the school of Christ, how are they disgraced and destroyed, if we abandon this rule of moral virtue, and treat our neighbours contrary to this divine principle of equity and love.

What shall we answer in the great judgment-day to an enquiring God, when in flaming fire he shall put us in mind: "I gave you a plain and easy rule of righteousness in my word, I wrote it in your hearts also, in very legible characters: If you had but looked carefully into your consciences, you might have read it there: But you resolved to sacrifice all to your lusts; you have wronged and defrauded your brethren, and exposed yourselves to my righteous sentence, for your wilful practice of unrighteousness against so plain a law."

It is a just remark which has often been made on this occasion: "The heathen emperor Severus shall rise up in the judgment with such a generation of christians, and condemn them: For he, by the light of nature, was taught highly to reverence this precept," when he had learned it from the professors of christianity. You might read it upon the walls of his palace; it was engraven there to govern his court in the times of peace;

and it is said, he carried it to war with him in the banners of his army, that it might regulate his conduct, upon all military occurrences. What a pity it is that Severus was a heathen! Or rather what a shame and sorrow it is, that there should be so few of this character in the courts, in the armies, in the markets, the shops, and the families of christians? When will that blessed day come, that shall bring this departed glory back again to the church of Christ? When shall the spirit of faith and charity be poured down from on high, and righteousness come from heaven to dwell among us?

Recollection.—Blessed Saviour, how great is thy goodness, to give us so complete, so plain, so easy, and so divine a rule to square all our actions in the social life! How happily hast thou comprized Moses and the prophets in two short lines, that is, the command of a supreme love to the Lord our God, and a love to our neighbour like that which we bear to ourselves?

Remember, O my soul, this short and comprehensive lesson; and amongst all thy duties and zeal toward thy God, forget not this rule of conduct toward thy fellow-creatures. I can never complain, it is too high and hard for my understanding to apprehend, or too tiresome and painful for my memory to retain, or too burthensome to carry it about always with me. I am convinced fully convinced of the justice of it: It strikes upon my conscience with strong light and evidence, and sometimes I feel the force of it, like an inward motive, awakening me to the practice of all that it enjoins. O that I might ever live under its prevailing influences, and then I might humbly appeal to God, that I have transacted my affairs with men, by the principles of sincere godliness, truth and justice.

Forgive, O my gracious God, all the wretched instances of my departure from this sacred law of equity. This sacred law will awaken the soul to repentance, as well as direct it to duty; and whatever station of life I am engaged in, whatever rank, character, office, or relation I bear in the world, or in the church of Christ; let me form all my future conduct by this command of my Saviour, let me bring all my past actions to this holy test, and let my conscience repent or rejoice.

O how bright a lustre would be cast on the religion of Jesus, and on all the professors of it, if this rule were always in use! But alas! it lies silent in our bibles, and we hear it not; or it sleeps in our bosom and we awake it not, when we have most need of its assistance. We read and we forget even this short rule of righteousness, and thus we practice iniquity daily, and injure our neighbours without remorse. O wretched creatures that we are? How great is our negligence and our guilt, that we do not so much as ask our consciences honest.

ly, how we should treat our fellow-creatures; but we ask our lusts and our passions, we enquire of our ambition and pride, our covetousness, our wrath and revenge, how we should behave to others.

Reflect, O my soul, how often thou hast turned aside from this blessed rule of thy Saviour, by consulting with the corrupt principles of flesh and blood. How often hast thou neglected this holy precept, to follow the vicious customs of a sinful world, and a degenerate age! A degenerate age indeed, that has forgot the practise of truth and love! Where shall we write this rule in large and golden letters, that the whole city might read it daily? Shall we engrave it on every door, that all who pass by may see it? Shall it stand fixed to every post of the house, that it may direct all your domestic conduct? Shall it meet us at the entrance of every shop, and thus guard our traffic from iniquity, and sanctify all our commerce? Shall we make a philactery of it, and wear it on the borders of our garments, that we may never put it off, unless we lie down to sleep, and cannot act? But the Spirit of Christ is the best writer of his own golden rule, and the heart of man is the best table to receive and bear this writing. O that the holy Spirit would write this sacred law of justice and love more deeply, more effectually in all our hearts, that the religion of our Saviour might look like itself, all amiable and holy; and that while we give glory to God on high, for his saving grace, we might find peace and truth spreading through all the earth, and good-will multiplied among the children of men. Thus the will of God would be done on earth, as it is in heaven, and the kingdom of our Redeemer come in its expected glory. *Amen.* Even so come Lord Jesus.

HYMN FOR SERMON XXXIII.

The Universal Rule of Equity.

BLESSED Redeemer, how divine,
How righteous is this rule of thine,
"Never to deal with others worse,
Than we we would have them deal with us."

This golden lesson short and plain,
Gives nor the mind nor memory pain:
And every conscience must approve
This universal law of love.

'Tis written in each mortal breast,
Where all our tenderest wishes rest;
We draw it from our inmost veins,
Where love to self resides and reigns.

Is reason ever at a loss?
Call in self-love to judge the cause;
Let our own fondest passion shew
How we should treat our neighbours too.

How bless'd would every nation prove,
Thus rul'd by equity and love!
All would be friends without a fee,
And form a paradise below.

Jesus, forgive us that we keep
Thy sacred law of love asleep;
And take our envy, wrath and pride,
Those savage passions, for our guide.

SERMON XXXIV.

The Atonement of Christ.

Rom. iii. 25.—Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation——

IT is one of the chief glories of the gospel, that it discovers a full atonement for sin by the blood of Christ, that it sets before us the reconciliation of sinners to an offended God, by the death of his own Son. One would be ready to wonder, that any of the guilty race of Adam should be unwilling to receive so divine a discovery, or should refuse a blessing so important.

But such unhappy principles have prevailed over the minds of some men, and particularly the Socinians in the last age, that they have been content to venture their eternal hopes on the mercy of God, without a dependance on the satisfaction made for sin, by Jesus the Saviour. They imagine Christ the Son of God came into our world chiefly to be a teacher of grace and duty, to be an example of piety and virtue, to plead with God for sinners, and in short to do little more than any other divine prophet might

rious enquiry into the connection of the words, but take them just as they lie, and make this plain sentence the foundation of my discourse.

Doctrine.—God hath set forth his Son, Jesus Christ, to be a propitiation for the sins of men.

When the apostle says, God hath set him forth, Christ is plainly the person intended: and this greek word προεθετο, set forth, denotes either, 1. That God hath fore-ordained and appointed his Son to become our propitiation by his divine purpose in eternity, which purpose he executed here in time: Or, 2. It intends that God hath set him forth, that is, proposed and offered him to the world as an atonement for the sins of those who trust in the merit of his death; for so the following words intimate, God set him forth for a propitiation, through faith in his blood. I am not solicitous which of these senses the reader will chuse; either of them perfectly agrees with the design of the apostle.

I would just take a brief notice also, that some interpreters transpose the words of the text a little, and read them thus, *whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation in his blood through faith*, and thus they suppose the apostle, in this very verse, declares that Christ atoned for our sins by his own blood: And if this be the true sense of it, it does but more effectually confirm the design of my doctrine, which is to shew that Christ, by his bloody death, became a sacrifice to God, in order to make satisfaction for the crimes of men. My method of discourse shall be this:

I. To explain more at large the manner in which I conceive Christ to become an atonement or propitiation for our sins.—II. To give some reasons to prove, that he is ordained of God, and set forth or offered to the world under this character.—And, III. I shall shew what glorious use is made of this doctrine throughout the whole christian life.

First, Let me explain the manner wherein Christ becomes an atonement or propitiation for sin. And to render this point easy to the lowest understanding, I would draw it out into these propositions:

Proposition I. The great God having made man, appointed to govern him by a wise and righteous law, wherein glory and honour, life and immortality are the designed rewards for perfect obedience; but tribulation and wrath, pain and death, are the appointed recompence to sinners who violate his law.

This law is in a great measure engraven on the hearts and consciences of all men by nature; at least the general precepts of it are written in the conscience: And mankind, by the light of

nature, has some notion also of these penalties, viz. the *indignation and wrath of God on those that do evil.* And such as have enjoyed the benefit of divine revelation, in patriarchal, Jewish, or christian times, have had much clearer discoveries thereof. This might be proved at large from the discourse of St. Paul; Rom. ii. 6—16. compared with Rom. i. 32. *The heathens who are without the law, have the work of the law written in their hearts,* and they know, or might know, that those who break it *are worthy of death.*

II. All mankind have broken the law of God. *There is none righteous; no, not one;* Rom. iii. 10. By sinning against God, we have lost all pretence to the reward of life, and immortality, and glory; Rom. iii. 23. *All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.* And we have also subjected ourselves to guilt and punishment; verse 19. *Every mouth is stopped, and all the world becomes guilty before God.* A sentence of wrath and death is *passed upon all men, for that all have sinned;* Rom. v. 12. and the best of saints were by nature *dead in trespasses and sins, and the children of wrath even as others;* Eph. ii. 1—3.

III. God in is infinite wisdom did not think fit to pardon sinful man, without some compensation for his broken law, some recompence for the dishonour done to his government. He did not see it proper to forgive all our guilt without some satisfaction for breaking his holy commands. I will not enter into that curious enquiry, whether God, considered absolutely as a sovereign, could have done it. It is enough for us that he hath, in effect, declared he would not do it, and that probably for such reasons as these:

1. If the Great Ruler of the world had pardoned the sins of men without any satisfaction, then his laws might have seemed not worth the vindicating. It might have been questioned, whether his statutes were so wisely contrived and framed, as to deserve a vindication, if he had freely forgiven all rebels that had broken them, without any consideration, without any satisfaction at all. It becomes a wise lawgiver to see that his wisdom in framing his laws, be not exposed to dishonour; and therefore his laws must be vindicated, when they are broken.

2. Men would have been tempted to persist in their rebellions, and to repeat their old offences continually, if there had been no vindication of the honour of the law, nor any of the threatenings of it had been executed. Therefore God requires a satisfaction for his broken commands, that his subjects might be kept in due obedience, by an awful fear of his governing justice. And it is on this account, viz. to deter and affright men

rom sinning, and breaking his laws, he hath given them an account in what a severe and terrible manner he dealt with *angels hat sinned, he spared them not*; 2 Pet. ii. 4. *but delivered them o chains of darkness until the judgment of the great day*; Jude 6.

3. His forms of government among his creatures, might ave appeared as a matter of small importance: His threatenings ight have been counted a trifling and useless formality, and mere ain terrors, if he had given laws, and took no care whether they vere obeyed or no: and if he let those creatures that broke them ome off, without any tokens of his displeasure, without any reparation of the honour due to his law and government: Let not inners deceive themselves with vain hopes, and dress up the reat God in their own imaginations, as a being of mere mercy, s an Almighty Creator, that keeps no discipline or authority among his creatures; Gal. vi. 7. "Be not deceived, God is not nocked; He that soweth to the flesh shall reap destruction."

4. God had a mind to make a very illustrious display, both f his justice and of his grace among mankind, which should be he solemn spectacle and the wonder of other worlds besides this, even the world of angels, principalities and powers; and therefore he hath designed his grace and his justice should mutually set forth each other, in his transactions with sinful man: On this account he would not pardon sin, without a satisfaction; but he hought fit to require and demand that sin be punished, and that he honour of the law be repaired to the full, that his justice night shine in full glory: And at the same time, in order to display his rich mercy, he would find out a way to save multitudes f these rebellious creatures.

These, and other reasons, infinitely superior to all our houghts, might be in the divine mind, why God would not pardon sinners without a satisfaction.

IV. Man, poor sinful man, is not able to make any satisfaction to God for his own sins, by his utmost labours of future obedience: For all that he can do for time to come, is but mere necessary duty, if he had not sinned at all; and therefore this can never make any recompence to the governing justice of God, for his past transgressions.

It is a most strange vain doctrine of the papists, that some persons are such great saints, that they do works of heroic virtue, beyond what they are required to do; and these they call works of supererogation, whereby they can merit some favours at the hands of God, not only for themselves, but for their neighbours too. Strange doctrine indeed, made up of folly, pride, and absurdity! Our best services are so much due to God, that if any man could practise complete righteousness, and fulfil the law of God constantly through all his life, it would not make amends

for one past offence, nor merit any favour of God for a criminal creature.

But, alas! man is so far from being able to fulfil perfect righteousness for time to come, that in this fallen state, he can do nothing that is truly good: He broke the law of God in days past, and he goes on to break it daily and hourly. His understanding is grown so dark, his will so perverse, and his affections and appetites so corrupt and vicious, by his departure from God, that he cannot answer the present demands of duty; much less can he bring an offering of righteousness to atone for past iniquities. "We are by nature dead in trespasses and sins."

V. Neither can this guilty, wretched creature man, make any satisfaction to the broken law of God by his sufferings, any more than by his doings. For the penalty of the law is tribulation and anguish of soul and body, the wrath of God and death: and how far this dreadful sentence reaches, what miseries are implied in it, and how long the execution of it must continue, who can tell? This we know, that God himself, who sees the full evil, and complete desert or demerit of sin, hath, in some places of scripture, threatened eternal punishment of sinners.

And if we may venture to judge concerning the greatness of the guilt, and demerit of our offences against God, by the same rules, by which reason teaches us to judge of the guilt and demerit of an offence against our fellow-creatures, we must say the guilt of sin is infinite; and therefore the punishment due to a sinning creature is everlasting, because he cannot any other way sustain punishment equal to his infinite demerit of sin. Among men the crime is always aggravated in proportion to the person, against whom it is committed: Therefore any offence against a father, or a king, has much more guilt in it, and is more severely punished, than the same offence committed against an inferior, or an equal. An attempt upon the life of a neighbour, is punished with imprisonment or a fine; But an attempt made on the life of a king deserves death.

Now the great God our Creator, being a king of infinite glory and majesty, infinitely superior to his creature man, every offence against this God, has a sort of infinity in it*: And God may demand satisfaction equal to the offence, that is infinite, which poor sinful man can never pay, so as to out-live the payment.

* Every circumstance that aggravates any crime, must aggravate it in a degree proportionable to that circumstance; otherwise we could never determine what is the degree of this aggravation, nor adjust the punishment in proportion to it. On this account, if the crime be committed against God, an infinite being, the guilt must be infinitely aggravated.

On this account, he is exposed to the execution of the sentence of God for ever: His punishment has no end. Perhaps this will be counted an old-fashioned argument, and not so generally received in our day, as it was in the days of our fathers: Therefore I have examined it afresh with all the skill I have, and having surveyed the objections which are raised against it, I think they are not hard to be answered: And, after all, so far as I can judge in a may of reasoning upon what scripture has revealed, this argument seems to have weight and strength in it still.

Were it not for the supposition of the infinite guilt and demerit of sin, I do not so plainly see the justice or equity of God in preparing everlasting chains of darkness, and eternal fire, for the devil and his angels, as a proper punishment due to their first act of rebellion against him, and because they *kept not their own first estate*† ; Jude 6. Nor indeed do I see such evident reason, why sinners among men should be threatened with eternal punishments, and punished with everlasting destruction, as a legal penalty due to past sins; Mat. xxv. 46. and 2 Thess. i. 9. which sins were done perhaps in a few days or hours, unless upon a supposition that all offences committed against the infinite majesty of God, have a sort of infinite demerit in them.

I beg leave to add this one thought more, and that is, if sin has not a sort of infinite demerit in it, I cannot see why man himself, by some years of penal sufferings, might not make full atonement for his own sins: But the language and current of scripture seems to represent sinful man as for ever lost to all hope in himself, and then the necessity of a Mediator appears with evidence and glory.

VI. Though man be incapable to satisfy for his own violation of the law, either by his obedience or his punishment, and so to restore himself to the favour of God, yet God would not suffer all mankind to perish. Therefore out of his abundant mercy, he appointed his own Son to undertake this work. His own, his only begotten Son, who is the brightness of his Father's glory, and who lay in the bosom of the Father before all worlds, his Son who was one with the Father, by a communion of the godhead, and who is himself, on this account, called God over all, blessed for ever; this well-beloved Son of God is ordained and appointed to be the great Reconciler between God and man.

† I grant, 1. That their continual persistence and obstinacy in sinful practices, may naturally render them continually miserable; and 2. This continued obstinacy may also, in a legal sense, merit contiual new punishment. And perhaps, on these two reasons, the actual eternity of hell may be justly supported. But unless we suppose every wilful rebellion against the infinite Majesty of God, to have also a sort of infinite evil in it, I do not see that everlasting chains, and eternal fire, are a proper deserved punishment, legally due to their first rebellion, that is, to one act of sin.

VII. Because God intended to make a full display of the terrors of his justice, and his divine resentment for the violation of his law; therefore he appointed his own Son to satisfy for the breach of it, by becoming a proper sacrifice of expiation or atonement: Now, both among Jews and heathens, the original notion and design of an expiatory sacrifice, is, when some other creature or person is put in the room or place of the transgressor, and the punishment or pain due to the transgressor is transferred to that other person or creature. Therefore beasts were slain for the offences of men, who were supposed to deserve death. And when any person became a surety for a city or nation that was defiled with sin, among the heathens, that person was substituted in their room, and so devoted to death. So the Son of God became a surety for sinful men: It pleased the Father to make him their sacrifice, and substituted him in their stead: God ordained that he should put himself into their circumstances, as far as was possible, with a due condescendency to his superior character, and that he should sustain, as near as possible, the very same pains and penalties which sinful man had incurred. Since tribulation and anguish of soul and body, a sense of the wrath of God, and death, were the appointed penalties of the sin of man; therefore he determined that his own Son should pass through all these: And since the law curses all that continue not in all the commands of it, therefore Christ was *made a curse for us, that he might redeem us from the curse of the law;* Gal. iii. 10—13. Hereby he gave a most awful and sensible demonstration to this visible world of mankind, and perhaps, much more to the invisible world of angels and devils, how dreadful a thing it is to break the law of a God, what infinite evil is contained in sin, and at what a terrible rate it must be expiated and atoned for.

VIII. The Son of God being immortal, could not sustain all these penalties of the law which man had broken, without taking the mortal nature of man upon him, without assuming flesh and blood: Thus his incarnation was necessary, that he might be a more proper surety, substitute, and representative of man who had sinned; and that he might be capable of suffering pain, and anguish, and death itself, in the room and stead of sinful men. It was because the *children who were* given to Christ; Heb. ii. 13, 14. because these *children were partakers of flesh and blood, therefore he himself also took part of the same, that through death he might redeem them,* that by his own dying he might make atonement for their sins; Heb. x. 5. *Sacrifice and offering* of beasts, thou wouldst not accept as equivalent for the sins of men: *But a body hast thou prepared me,* saith our Lord,

hat men might be redeemed by the offering the body of Christ, once for all; ver. 10.

It was in the prospect of the Son of God becoming man, by taking flesh and blood upon him, that God spake thus to David; Ps. lxxxix. 19. "I have exalted one chosen out of the people; that is, out of mankind: I have laid help upon one that is mighty: And when he was found in fashion as a man;" Phil. i. 10. God laid on him the iniquities of us all by imputation; Is. liii. 5, 6. even as the sins, and iniquities, and trespasses of the children of Israel were laid on the head of the goat of old, by the confession and hand of Aaron; Lev. xvi. 21.

When the guilt was thus transferred to him, as far as it was possible for the Son of God to sustain it, he then became liable to punishment; and indeed that seems to me to be the truest and and justest idea of transferred or imputed guilt, viz. when a surety is accepted to suffer in the room of the offender, then the pain or penalty is due to him by consent: And as this is the true original and foundation of expiatory sacrifices, as I have shewn before, so this seems to be the foundation of that particular manner, wherein scripture teaches us this doctrine: "He that knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him;" 2 Cor. v. 21. "His own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree;" 1 Pet. ii. 24. "The chastisement or punishment of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed;" Is. liii. 5. And in many other places of scripture we read the same sort of language. This doctrine is supported with great strength, by the most learned and pious Dr. Owen, in his short treatise of the satisfaction of Christ.

Upon this account, though God the Father was never truly angry with his beloved Son, yet it pleased the Father to bruise him, when he stood in the room of guilty creatures. The Father himself put him to grief, and made his soul an offering for sin; Is. liii. 10. Then the Son of God began to be sore amazed, and very heavy at the approaching deluge of this sorrow; Mark xiv. 33. The Father forsook him for a season, withdrew his comfortable influences, and gave him some such exquisite sight and sense of that indignation and wrath that was due to sin, as filled his holy soul with anguish, "his soul was exceeding sorrowful even unto death;" Mat. xxvi. 38. While his body sweat drops of blood in the garden: And at last he poured out his soul to death, and "gave his life a ransom for many: he reconciled us to God by the blood of his cross;" Col. i. 20.

Though we allow the human nature of Christ to be the highest, the noblest, and best of creatures, and in that sense might be worth ten thousand of us: yet if sin has an infinite evil

in it, then no mere creature, by all his sufferings, could make complete and equal satisfaction for sin: But when the Son of God, who is one with the Father, takes flesh and blood upon him, and becomes God manifest in the flesh, here God and man are united in one complex person, and hereby we enjoy an all-sufficient Saviour, a Reconciler beyond all exception, a Sacrifice of atonement, equal to the guilt of our transgressions. And so far as I can judge, it is on this account one apostle says; Acts xx. 28. "God redeemed the church with his own blood; and another asserts, Hereby perceive we the love of God, that he laid down his life for us;" 1 John iii. 16.

And I do not yet see sufficient reason why that expression of St. Paul; Heb. ix. 14. may not be referred to the same sense. "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience, &c." If the eternal Spirit signify the divine nature or godhead, which dwelt bodily in the man Jesus, then the dignity of his complete person is made the foundation of the value of his blood. This dignity of the godhead which was personally united to the man who suffered, spreads an infinite value over his sufferings and merit: And this renders them equal to that infinite guilt and demerit of sin, which would have extended the punishment of man to everlasting ages. The infinite dignity of the person suffering, answers to the infinite dignity of the person offended, and so takes away the necessity of the everlasting duration of it.

Thus our blessed Mediator, the man Jesus Christ, in whom dwells all the fulness of the godhead bodily, fulfilled the righteous demands of the law, and suffered the penalties due to our sins. He magnified his Father's law in this manner, and made it honourable, beyond what all the sons of Adam could do by their utmost sufferings. Thus the justice of God shines most gloriously in the sufferings of his Son Jesus Christ: Thus the great God vindicated his own character, as a wise and righteous law-giver, before the face of men and angels, in the anguish and death of his own Son: He gave a most awful and formidable assurance, that he was not a God to be trifled with, and that the sin of his creatures should not go unpunished. He that spared not his own Son, when he stood in the room of sinners, will never spare guilty rebels that persist in their rebellions. Thus far we see how Christ became a sacrifice of atonement.

IX. God, the great Ruler of the world, having received such ample satisfaction for sin, by the sufferings of his own Son, can honourably forgive his creature man, who was the transgressor. There is so glorious a reparation made to the honour of his righteous and broken law, that he can pardon sinners without

dishonour to himself, and his government. He can glorify his justice and his mercy, at once, in a most exuberant and illustrious manner, since his own Son has become a priest of atonement, and offered up himself as a sacrifice, to make *propitiation for sin: He can declare his righteousness, though he passes by a thousand offences that are past, and can shew himself, just to his own law and government, at the same time that he forgives millions of sins; and is a justifier of him who believeth in Jesus*; Rom. iii. 25, 26.

X. I might add in the last place, since my text intimates it, that as the great God in his eternal counsels, appointed his Son Jesus Christ to undertake this difficult and glorious work, for the salvation of sinful men, so in the days of the gospel he has, in the most plain and explicit manner, offered this reconciliation to sinners who return to God by the mediation of Jesus Christ: He has proposed peace to those who are sincerely desirous to be reconciled to God, and to have all enmity done away on both sides; to those who trust in the virtue of the blood of Christ, as the foundation of this divine peace between God and them, or in the language of my text, to those who have faith in his blood.

But let it be remembered, that this desire to be reconciled, must proceed from a painful sense of sin, that makes a separation between God and the soul: This implies sincere repentance in the nature of it. It must be such a faith in Jesus and his sacrifice, as works powerfully by holy love, and produces all the good fruits of religion in the heart and life. All faith is useless to attain peace with God, unless it carries in it the springs and seeds of love and holiness. Though we are justified by faith, yet it must not be a mere bold presumption, but a living faith, which will appear in its fruits.

Thus I have endeavoured to perform the first thing I proposed, and that was to shew in what manner I conceive of the Son of God becoming an atonement for the sins of men. Far be it from me, to imagine that every one must believe these things just after the same order, and in the same manner in which I have learned to conceive of them: Several learned and pious men have explained the manner of this atonement in another way: But they agree in the doctrine of a proper satisfaction for sin. Different persons behold the representation of these great and important things of christianity in different lights: And though, according to my measure of knowledge in the scripture, this manner of conception of the atonement of Christ seems most agreeable to the word of God, yet, I am fully persuaded, God has never made salvation to depend upon a nice exactness of sentiment about the mere order of ranging these divine dis-

coveries, or about the precise logical relations of the sufferings of Christ, to our sins, or to our pardon. Whosoever sincerely confesses and repents of sin, and trusts in the all-sufficient atonement and sacrifice of Christ, to remove the guilt of it, has abundant assurance from scripture, that the blood of Jesus Christ will cleanse him from all sin, and that the Son of God has been, and will be his High-priest, to reconcile him to God the Father.

The Recollection.—It becomes me now to reflect on what I have heard this day. The atonement of Christ is one of the chief glories, and most surprising wonders of my religion : It is the ground of my hope, it is the very life of my soul. Here I have been learning the several transactions of the great God, the Creator and Ruler of the world, with all the children of men from the beginning of their creation. The light of nature informs me in an imperfect manner, and the scripture with much brighter evidence assures me, that I was made under the law, and not born to live at random, according to the wild dictates of appetite and passion. I am informed also, my Creator has guarded the honour of his law with indignation and wrath, with pain of the flesh, and anguish of the mind, and death itself, as the penalties to be inflicted on those that break it. A law divinely wise and righteous, and a sanction of solemn and divine terror !

But, alas! I am one of the sinful guilty race of man. My very nature is corrupt, my powers of action are unholy, and I have broken the law of my God in a thousand instances. My conscience condemns me, my mouth is stopped, I am guilty before God, I lie under the sentence of his condemning law by nature, and am by nature a child of disobedience, and a child of wrath. It is a glorious instance of divine mercy and forbearance, that he has not executed the severities of his law upon me long ago : It is rich mercy and adorable patience that my flesh and spirit have not been filled with all these terrors, that I am not made as wretched as I have been rebellious.

Nor can I expect, that the great and terrible God, who sent his indignation upon angels when they sinned, turned them out of heaven, and chained them in darkness, should forgive all my infinite offences, without some reparation made for the honour of his broken law. He is a great God indeed, his majesty is tremendous, and every thing that belongs to him must have its due honour.

If I labour with all my powers to make him some recompence for my past iniquities by new obedience, I find it is impossible. The best of my righteousnesses are all defective : My holiest services want some forgiveness as well as my wilful sins.

'or can I suffer the punishment due to my iniquities, without ɛing for ever miserable. All the doors of hope are shut against ıe, nor by the utmost effort and labour of my own powers, can find a way to escape: If I am left to myself in this state, must despair and perish. But blessed, for ever blessed be the ıercy of my God, that he has sent his own Son to take flesh and lood upon him. He has sent him in the likeness of sinful flesh ı become a sacrifice for sin, to sustain the sorrows which I could ever sustain, and to provide a laver of his own blood to cleanse ı from all sin. Lord, I humbly approach this sacred laver, to ash away the defilements of my soul.

Christ is become a sacrifice to divine justice, in the room and ead of men. And he is also our great High-priest: For he fered himself up to the strokes of justice, and the penal demands ' the law of God, and thereby he hath shewn himself to be a iest of reconciliation. How adorable is this contrivance! How nazing is this love! How should sinners be surprized with a nse of this abounding grace! Here I behold the Son of God ooping down from the height of his glory, to become a mortal an, surrounded with flesh and sorrows: I behold the first fa- ɔurite of heaven, the first beloved Son leaving the bosom of his ather, and the fulness of celestial joys, that he might unite mself to our feeble nature, and taste the anguish and the smart at our rebellions had deserved. I behold him forsaken of his ather, and lying under the weight and terror of some unknown scoveries and impressions of that divine indignation and wrath at was due to sinners; unknown impressions indeed, that struck e Son of God with amazement, and made his soul exceeding rrowful even to death.

And was all this for my sins, O my Saviour: Didst thou stain these heavy sufferings from the hand of God, that such a bel as I might be reconciled? Yes, all this for my sins, if I am and a sincere believer on the Son of God.

Enquire now, O my soul, dost thou believe in Christ? Hast ou seen thy heavy guilt, and thy danger of eternal death? ast thou been weary and heavy laden with a sense of thy past iquities? Hast thou been pained at thy heart under the present wer of indwelling sin: And hast thou fled for refuge to the pe set before thee in the gospel? Hast thou joyfully received sus the Saviour by faith in his blood? by a living and active ith? Hast thou committed thyself to him, to be delivered from e reign of sin, as well as from the condemnation of it? Then ıyest thou join with the blessed apostle, and speak in the ıguage of faith, *He loved me, and gave himself for me?* al. ii. 20.

Let me meditate again the sorrows and agonies of my dear, my adored Redeemer. Infinite agonies and sorrows, beyond all the powers of language. Is my heart made of stone, that it can hear such an history and not melt within me, have I no tender part within me to bleed at the rehearsal of such anguish, and such love? Blessed Jesus smite the rock of my heart, and let it pour out new streams of repentance and affectionate gratitude. I was dead, and the Son of God gave himself up to death, in order to raise me to life again. I was a traitor and an enemy, and he hath sustained the arrows of the Almighty to reconcile me to his Father, and turn away his infinite indignation. My great High-priest has offered up himself a bloody sacrifice for me, that my guilt might be forgiven, and cancelled for ever.

Think, O my soul, study, contrive, speak, what wilt thou render to the Lord for such astonishing condescension, and such unexampled grace. How wilt thou show thy inestimable value of his atonement? What does he require of thee, but to keep those garments clean, which he has washed in so rich a fountain as his own blood? And shall I ever wilfully indulge the practice of sin again, and return to my old defilements? Shall I ever consent to break the law of my God? Have I not seen the dreadful nature and dismal effects of it, in the agonies and death of my dearest Lord? What shall I do that I may never sin more? Lord, I cannot preserve myself from the fatal infection, while I

HYMN FOR SERMON XXXIV.

The Atonement of Christ.

HOW is our nature spoil'd by sin!
Yet nature ne'er hath found
The way to make the conscience clean,
Or heal the painful wound.

In vain we seek for peace with God
By methods of our own:
Jesus there's nothing but thy blood
Can bring us near thy throne.

The threat'nings of the broken law
Impress our souls with dread:
If God his sword of vengeance draw,
It strikes our spirits dead.

But thy illustrious sacrifice
Hath answered these demands;
And peace and pardon from the skies
Come down by Jesus' hands.

Here all the ancient types agree,
The altar and the lamb:
And prophets in their visions see
Salvation through his name.

'Tis by thy death we live, O Lord:
'Tis on thy cross we rest:
For ever be thy love ador'd,
Thy name for ever blest.

SERMON XXXV.

The Atonement of Christ.

Rom. iii. 25.—Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation——

HAVING explained the manner in which Christ is a propitiation for sin; I come in the second place to propose some reasons to evince the truth of this doctrine, namely, That God hath ordained his Son Jesus to be our propriation or sacrifice of atonement. And here I shall proceed by degrees, from some apparent probabilities, to more evident and convincing proofs.

I. The first reason I shall give for it is this, that an atonement for sin, and an effectual method to answer the demands of an offended God, is the first great blessing which guilty mankind stood in need of: but the powers of nature could never procure it, nor could the light of reason ever shew them how to obtain it: Now it is the design of the gospel of Christ to supply the wants and deficiencies of guilty nature, that is both impotent and blind; it is to introduce an effectual reconciliation between God and sinners; it is to point out an atonement to them, answerable to their guilt, which they wanted, and to discover a solid foundation for peace. This is done in the death of Christ.

A few easy reflections of natural conscience, will acquaint all the thinking part of men that they are sinners, that they have offended the great and glorious God who made them: And those that have read the histories of mankind, and have surveyed distant nations and past ages, have found this to be almost the universal enquiry of men, "What shall we do to pacify the anger of that God, against whom we have sinned?" The heathen world had an awful notion of the vengeance of heaven. Hence arose endless forms of superstition: How many long and costly ceremonies, what painful and bloody rites of worship have been invented and practised by men, to make some compensation for their crimes? All the craft and contrivance of their priests, could never have prevailed with the bulk of mankind, to take such yokes of bondage upon them, if there had not been something in natural conscience, which wanted an atonement and peace to be made with heaven, from a sense of their own guilt.

The prophet Micah introduces this general language of an awakened conscience, *Wherewith shall I come before the Lord,*

or bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings?—Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? Micah vi. 6, 7. Alas! All these are vain and fruitless proposals: But the gospel makes the enquiring conscience easy, when it proposes the blood of the Son of God, appointed by the Father as a satisfactory offering for the sins of men: This is what the guilty world wanted, but could never find out. This the gospel hath revealed and set in an open light.

And indeed, if the great God who is offended, did ever send down a Peace-maker to reconcile heaven and earth, it is very reasonable to suppose that he should answer the universal cry of nature distressed with guilt; and that he should furnish sinful creatures with such an atonement for sin, and such a solid foundation for their acceptance with himself, as might fully satisfy their reason and their awakened consciences. And this is no where to be found in so evident and complete a manner, as in the death of Christ.

II. The very first discoveries of grace, which were made to man after his fall, implied in them something of an atonement for sin, and pointed to the propitiation which Christ has now made; *Gen.* iii. 15, &c. The first appearance of grace was the promise given that the *seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent*, that is, he should abolish the guilt, mischief, and misery that sin and the tempter had introduced: But in order to do this, the woman's seed must have his heel bruised, must sustain some personal sufferings.

Immediately after this, sacrifices of beasts were instituted* as a type and prefiguration of some future glorious sacrifice and atonement that should be made to God for the sins of men. Now it is the very notion of an expiatory sacrifice, as I have shewn before, that some creature is provided to stand in the room of the original transgressor and to bear his guilt and suffer punishment in his stead, that thereby the transgressor having his guilt taken away, may be delivered and saved. And when Adam was

* Though we have no express revelation in scripture, that sacrifices were now instituted, yet there is abundant reason to believe it: For, 1. Abel offered bloody sacrifices. Now we can hardly suppose that Adam or Abel would ever invent such a strange ceremony to please God with it: Nor could reason ever dictate to them, that God, their Creator, would be pleased with such a bloody practice, as cutting his living creatures to pieces, and then burning them with fire. Nor would God who is jealous of his prerogative in matters of worship, ever have shewn his acceptance of these rites, if he himself had not appointed them. 2. Though we do not read that Adam offered sacrifice, yet it is plain he was not permitted to eat flesh; and therefore it is more probable, that when he killed beasts, it was for sacrifices: And God taught him to make clothing for himself out of their skins. This was immediately after the fall.

ordered to put a beast to death which had not sinned, in order to worship or honour God by it, and when he found that he himself who had sinned, was not put to death, it was not hard for him to understand that the beast was put to death in his room and stead: And it is not unlikely that God told him so.

Let us consider further, that it is exceeding probable, when the *Lord God made coats of skins for Adam and his wife*; Gen. iii. 21. these were the skins of the beasts that had been put to death in sacrifice: And thus God made it appear to them, that their nakedness was covered, and the shame of their guilt removed, by a blessing derived from the beasts that were slain. The skins of the sacrifices being put upon their bodies, might abate something of their former fear, and encourage them to appear before God, who were terrified a little before, at the thoughts of their guilt and nakedness. Their deserved death was transferred to the sacrificed animal; and the skin of the animal sacrificed, was transferred to them as a covering for their guilt and shame. These are no obscure intimations of benefit and safety to be derived to sinners, from some atonement to be made for sin.

If we will hearken to St. Paul, he explains the first promise, when he says, Heb. ii. 14. that *Christ took flesh and blood upon him, that he might, by his own death destroy the devil, who had the power of death*, or had introduced it into the world. Here the Saviour's heel was bruised, and the head of the serpent broken; nor can it be well supposed, how the death of Christ should destroy the works of the devil, but by making an atonement for the sins of men; for which sins divine justice had put them under his power or tyranny.

I will not presume to say, that Adam himself could read so much gospel as this in those first words of promise; or that he knew in so explicit and distinct a manner, the designs and ends of a sacrifice, when God taught him the practice: Yet it is very probable, that the great God condescended to give a much farther explication both of the first words of comfort concerning the seed of the woman, and of his own appointment of sacrifices, and of the reason of them, than Moses has written, or than we who live at this distance of time can ever certainly know.

III. Suppose what I have yet offered, be too obscure a foundation for this doctrine, yet let us consider that the following train of ceremonies, which were appointed by God in the Jewish church, when he separated a peculiar people to himself, are plain significations of such an atonement for sin as our Lord Jesus has made, and they confirm the meaning of the first institution of sacrifices.

I will grant indeed, that many of the ceremonies of the Jewish church, had also some other intendments, *viz.* To distinguish the nation of Israel from the Gentile world, and to keep them in subjection to God, who was their political head or king, as well as their God, to preserve them as a nation in his favour, and restore them when they had offended him as their governor and king: But a few considerations will give us sufficient evidence, that these are mere subordinate designs of God in the Jewish law, and especially in his institution of the ceremonies of atonement and priesthood.

First Consideration.—The Jewish ceremonies are often represented as types or figures of gospel-blessings by the apostle Paul; 2 *Cor.* iii. *Gal.* vi. *Col.* ii. *Heb.* vii, viii, ix, x. The levitical ceremonial rites were but the letter, of which the gospel of Christ is the spirit or meaning: Those were but as a veil to cover the good things of the gospel; they were but weak and poor rudiments or elements of learning, to lead us into the knowledge of gospel-blessings. "The law was our school-master to bring us to Christ. They were but a shadow of things to come, whose substance or body is Christ: They served but to the example and shadow of heavenly things: that is, the things of the gospel: They were a figure for the time present; a shadow of those good things to come, which the Holy Ghost signified by them." The great end of these Jewish ceremonial appointments in the sense of this inspired writer, was, that they should stand but as types and figures of things under the gospel; as emblems of the various offices of the Messiah that was to come, and eminently of his priesthood and propitiation. Now the substance is superior to the shadow.

Second Consideration.—This is more evident still, if we consider that many of the defilements which were to be removed by these sacrifices and purifications, were of an external and corporeal nature, which, considered in themselves, were generally innocent as to moral guilt, and did not want such sort of bloody purgations*. Thence we may reasonably infer, that these external defilements of the body, did typify and represent the

* It may be worthy our notice here, that blood is no very proper liquid for purification of any defilements, unless it be, as it represents death to be an atonement for the guilt of sin, which is a moral defilement of the soul. And yet Heb. ix. 22. *Almost all things under the law are purged by blood:* One would think water should be a much better cleanser: But we find this purging or cleaning signifies atonement for sin, when the very next words give us the reason why blood is appointed, *viz.* because pardon or remission is the thing sought; *for without shedding of blood is no remission.*

It is plain therefore, that to a guilty and defiled soul or conscience, every thing is defiled; as *Tit.* i. 15. But when both the people and their sacred utensils were sprinkled with blood, it denotes that all things are sanctified and pure, to those whose souls partake of the atonement of Christ, and whose sins are remitted through his bloody death.

the moral and sinful pollutions of the soul: and consequently, that the external and corporeal forms of atonement and purgation were chiefly designed as types and figures of the blood of Christ, which was a real propitiation for the sins of the soul.

Third Consideration.—The most exact and happy resemblance and conformity, between the method of atonement by the priesthood and sacrifice of Christ, and the appointed rites of the levitical priesthood and atonement, very naturally leads us to suppose, that one was designed to figure out and foretel the other; especially since the scripture gives us such frequent hints of it. The great God, to whom all his own works are known from the beginning of the world, had the sacrifice and priesthood of his Son Jesus ever in his eye, when he ordained the Jewish forms of atonement. He kept in view Jesus the high-priest, who was hereafter to enter into heaven in the virtue of his own blood, when he appointed Aaron to go into the holy place, the figure of the true, with the blood of the yearly expiation. He kept in view the merit of Christ's death, which was to be applied to our souls and consciences by faith, when he appointed the people to be sprinkled with the blood of the sacrifices: And therefore the blood of Christ is called the blood of sprinkling; *Heb.* xii. 24. And when he ordained the morning and evening lamb for a continual burnt-offering, he pointed, though afar off, to the Messiah, the Lamb of God, that must take away the sins of men.

These resemblances might be shewn in a multitude of other instances: but I cannot omit this one, *viz.* As the killing of the beast was designed to hold forth the violent and bloody death of Christ, the great sacrifice; so the burning of the flesh and entrails on the altar by that divine fire, which was always kept alive there, and which was kindled at first from heaven, seems plainly intended to foretel those sacred divine impressions of the indignation of God due to sinners, which were to be made upon the holy soul of Christ himself, *when it pleased the Father to bruise him, and put him to grief:* For the indignation of God is often represented by fire.

We must not imagine therefore, that these levitical ordinances were first in the design of God, as proper statutes for the Jewish nation, and then that the Son of God came into the world, and passed through such special scenes of life, death, and resurrection, merely in order to copy out these Jewish ordinances: But we must conceive the Son of God, first designed as our great Atonement and High-priest on earth, and in heaven: And in the view and foresight hereof all those levitical ordinances were given to the Jews as figures and emblems, to give early notice before-hand, of the blessings of the great Messiah. Surely the

atonement of the Messiah, which was to be a real relief for the guilt of all nations, was of much more importance, and held a higher rank in the ideas and designs of God, than the mere ceremonies given to a single nation.

If it should be objected still, that those Jewish rites have been plainly proved by some learned men to be political services done to God as their King and Governor, for he dwelt in Jerusalem as their king, and kept his court among them in the tabernacle and the temple. I answer:

1. This may very well be granted as an inferior and subordinate design of God: For the consideration of God, as the civil or political ruler of the Jewish nation, is much inferior to the consideration of him as the Creator, and the Lord of the souls and consciences, not only of the nation of Israel, but of all mankind, who were to derive benefit from the sacrifice of Christ. The supreme intent and meaning of any constitution, does by no means destroy those which are subordinate. It may be allowed also:

2. That the sacrifices duly offered, did make a real and proper atonement for the political guilt of the Israelites in the sight of God, considered as their peculiar king, and continued them in his political favour, or restored them to it, after some breach of the Jewish laws. This seems to be the sense of the apostle, *Heb.* ix. 13. *The blood of bulls and goats sanctifies to the purifying of the flesh,* as well as of many expressions in the books of Moses. And yet these same sacrifices might make a typical atonement for their moral guilt in the sight of God, considered as their God, that is, as the Lord of conscience, and the God of the souls of men: And all this with a direct aspect upon the sacrifice of Christ, the great and real atonement that was to come: And indeed, the next words; *Heb.* ix. 14. intimate so much, *How much more shall the blood of Christ purge your consciences from dead works?* that is, from works of sin which deserve death in the sight or judgment of God, considered as the supreme Lord of souls and consciences.

These sacrifices, I say, could make but a typical atonement for moral guilt in the sight of God, considered as their God; for it is sufficiently evident to any thinking mind, that it *was not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin,* as committed against a God; *Heb.* x. 4. And therefore the Jews themselves, when they had offered their chief sacrifice of yearly expiation, had not so clear, so full, and so satisfactory a peace in their consciences, as the gospel of Christ bestows on christians; The apostle says, verse 1, 2. *The comers thereunto were not made perfect*; for if they had *the worshippers once purged, would have no more conscience of sin,* or sense of guilt. *Wherefore, when*

Christ came into the world, he saith, sacrifice and offering, that is, *of bulls and goats, thou wouldst not, for they were not sufficient, but a body hast thou prepared me*; and for what end this was done, the following verses tell us, that sinners might be purified from the guilty defilements of sin, *through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all*; verse 10.

Thus the blessed God, who designed in due time to make his own Son an atonement for sinners, did early give some emblematical notices of this divine atonement to those few who were taught to understand them: And in this manner he kept alive in the world the hope of some such glorious future transaction, which should be the ground-work of peace between God and men, by the appointed death and sacrifice of beasts throughout all ages, ever since he made the first promise, and gave the first hope of grace to fallen man.

And indeed, all the souls that were pardoned, and all the sins that were remitted under the several ancient dispensations of Adam, Noah, Abraham, and Moses, must be referred to the virtue of this great sacrifice of the Son of God, though all who were pardoned might not distinctly know the ground of it. *Him hath God set forth to be a propitiation for the remission of sins that are past* in far distant ages, as well as for sins that are yet to come; *Rom.* iii. 25. His sacrifice has a most extensive efficacy, it reaches through all nations, and all ages, from the beginning of the world to the end of it. It was this sacrifice of Christ, that gave virtue to all other institutions and rights of atonement that were appointed by God himself. In themselves they were weak and insufficient, but they were made powerful through the blood of Christ, to speak pardon and peace in some measure, to the guilty conscience, though since Christ is come, we hear the joyful sound of peace and pardon more distinctly.

IV. Nor was this doctrine manifested only in the ancient forms of worship and sacrifice which God had ordained, but some of the noblest of the following prophecies confirm and explain the first promise, and shew that Christ was to die as an atoning sacrifice for the sins of men. I will mention only the words of those two great men, Isaiah and Daniel. By Daniel we are told, that the *Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself, and the design of this is, to finish transgression, to make an end of sin, to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness*; *Dan.* ix. 24, 26. Isaiah speaks the same thing more largely, in his liii. chapter, verses 5, 6, 10, 11. *Christ was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed: We like sheep have gone astray, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.——It pleased the Lord to bruise him, and*

to put him to grief; and to make his soul an offering for sin.—By the knowledge of him shall he justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities. How exceeding plain and strong is this language to support my doctrine, and how exceeding hard to construe it to any other sense!

It may not be amiss to subjoin the witness of John the Baptist, who was more than a prophet, and the very fore-runner of the Messiah; John i. 26. *Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world.* Now a Lamb takes away sin in no other way than by dying as a sacrifice. Thus our blessed Redeemer who, once in the end of the world, appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, as a great High-priest, was, as it were, ushered into his office by a long train of types and prophecies: All these went before him, that when his great sacrifice was offered, it might not seem a strange thing, but might be more easily received by all the world, who stood in so much need of him, and to whom the tradition of sacrifices had been conveyed from Noah; and especially by the Jews, who had so much notice of him before, by more express revelations beyond what the heathens could learn by their broken traditions of sacrifice.

V. Our Saviour himself, among the rest of his ministrations as a prophet, taught us the doctrine of atonement for sin by his death, and that in these three ways:

1. He did speak of it, though but sparingly, in plain and express language to his own disciples in private. Mat. xx. 28. *The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many:* And this he spoke a little after he had foretold his sufferings, his crucifixion, his death, and his rising again the third day.

2. He preached this doctrine publicly to the multitude in parables and figures of speech; *John* vi. 51. *The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you:* Which can signify nothing but his dying as a propitiation for sin, that we might live by our feeding upon his sacrifice, or partaking the benefit of it. *John* xii. 24. *The hour is come that the Son of man must be glorified. Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.* Verse 32. *If I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto me: This he said, signifying what death he should die.* His being lifted up on the cross should draw many souls to him as their way to the favour of God. Once he spoke it in a little plainer language, in public; *John* x. 11. where he represents himself as the *good Shepherd, who lays down his life for his sheep.*

2. He taught the same doctrine both in types or emblems,

and in plain language, just before he died, at the institution of the holy supper; Luke xxii. 19. *He took bread—and brake it, saying, This is my body which is given for you.* And of the cup he said, *This cup is the New Testament in my blood which is shed for you*; or as St. Matthew expresses it, *This is my blood of the New Testament which is shed for many, for the remission of sins.* These things put together, make it evident that Christ himself taught this doctrine.

Objection. But it will be said, How can we suppose that this doctrine of atonement by the death of Christ, should be so considerable a part of the gospel, if our blessed Redeemer, the great Prophet of his church, spoke so seldom of it in public, and that in so obscure a manner?

Answer 1. This doctrine of atonement for sin by his death, and the acceptance of it with God the Father, could not be so well preached in public till he died, and rose again; for his death was the foundation of this atonement; his resurrection and his ascension to heaven were the proofs of its being accepted of God. Now it was divinely wise and proper for our Lord not to preach such doctrines too freely in public to the multitude, till these events should appear in the world. If he had spoken all these things, concerning himself it would have probably amazed and confounded the common people, and raised their rage or their ridicule; so ignorant and so full of prejudice as they were in that day.

2. If Christ had publicly and plainly preached up the atonement of his death, he must thereby have foretold openly that he must die as a sacrifice; and this might have had very ill effects on the malicious Jews, either, 1. To provoke them to kill him, before his hour was come, and pretend that they only obeyed his own prophecy and commission when they put him to death: Or, 2. They might lay hold on him, and keep him prisoner without killing him, to endeavour to falsify his prophecies of his death, and thus attempt to make void his doctrine of atonement.

It is true, God, by his immediate influence on the wills of men, could have prevented these effects: But it is not the manner of God's conduct in providence to answer and accomplish his own predictions by such immediate, divine, and over-ruling restraints upon the wills of men, if it may done otherwise. And therefore indeed, the prophecies, and especially such as are accomplished in the same age in which they are spoken, are usually given forth in metaphors and parables, that men may not so clearly and perfectly understand them, and that God, in his moral government of the world, may not be constrained to go out of his common and ordinary methods, in order to bring these prophecies to pass.

3. It is evident, from many expressions in the evangelists, at it was not the design of Christ, in his own life-time, to pub-h the grace and glory of the gospel, in so clear, so distinct, and complete a manner, as he designed to have it published by his postles after he was gone to heaven. The design of his own ublic ministry was rather to prepare the way for the setting up of s own kingdom in the world, than to set it up in the full glory f it in his own person. According to this view of things, his reaching was formed; *Repent ye for the kingdom of heaven is hand; Mat.* iv. 17. That is, the gospel state approaches, or ath approached to you. The prayer he taught his disciples ands on the same foot, wherein they are instructed to pray, *Thy ingdom come*; Mat. vi. 10. Therefore when he spake to the ultitude, of the special glories of his gospel, and especially of is atoning sacrifice, it was generally in parables; and when he structed his disciples more particularly in private, he gave them ut hints of it, and told them that they should publish these things pon the house-tops after the Son of man should rise from the ead, but not before.

Even just before his death, his own disciples themselves ould not bear many things that he had to teach them; *John* xvi. 2. These things were reserved therefore for the forty days ommunication with them after his resurrection, when he spake ith them *of things pertaining to the kingdom of God;* Acts i. 3. nd more especially for the teachings of his own Spirit, which he oured out upon them after he went to heaven. By these means ey were more completely furnished for their ministry, and learn-d the doctrines of the gospel, in a more perfect manner than ever ur Lord himself taught them in his life-time. Thus it appears hat though Christ was the founder of a new religion among nen, yet there is good reason to be given, why he did not teach lainly and publicly some of the chief doctrines of this religion, luring his own life on earth, *viz.* because these doctrines were uilt on his death, his rising again, and ascending to heaven, which vents were then unaccomplished*.

Thence we may infer, as we pass along, that if we would earn the plainest and fullest account of the gospel of Christ, it is ot enough for us to consult merely his public sermons, or the istories of his life, which are called the four gospels, but we must ead carefully the writings of the apostles after he went to hea-ven; for, during the life of Christ, neither did he preach, nor did

* I grant there are some other ingenious and probable reasons offered by the uthor of Miscellanea Sacra, why Christ did not communicate his gospel so com-letely to his disciples in his own life-time; Essay 1. p. 156—152. but what I ave mentioned is sufficient for my purpose.

the apostles themselves learn this gospel in the complete extent and glory of it. But this is only an inference by the way.

[This is a proper pause in the middle of this sermon, when it is read in families.]

Let us proceed to the next reason to prove that Christ was a propitiation for our sins in his death.

VI. The terrors of soul, the consternation and inward agonies which our blessed Lord sustained a little before his death, were a sufficient proof that he endured punishments in his soul which were due to sin. These were vastly greater than the persecutions of bloody men, and the mere fears of dying: Can it ever be imagined, that the Son of God, whose virtues and graces, whose patience and holy fortitude sparkled with divine lustre in the various parts of his life, should have shewn so much natural fear, and innocent disquietude of spirit, at the mere thoughts of death by the hands of men, as if he had nothing else to encounter with? When this dreadful hour was come, and the powers of darkness were let loose upon him, *he began to be sore amazed, and very heavy;* Mark xiv. 23. He told his disciples, *My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death; He went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed, that if it were possible that hour might pass from him.* He entreated his Father, *with prayers and supplications, with strong cries and tears;* Heb. v. 7. Such a terror was upon his spirits, that three times he repeated the same petition, that he might be excused if possible from drinking that cup of sorrow. The agonies of his soul pressed great drops of blood through the pores of his body, and bathed him in a crimson sweat. These cries and tears, these agonies and these sweats of blood preached the doctrine of atonement with dreadful power, and uncontested evidence. And as upon the cross, so in the garden, it is probable his Father forsook him, or hid his face from him, so that he had need of an angel to be sent down from heaven on purpose to comfort or strengthen him; *Luke* xxii. 43. It was here that he learned feelingly what was the curse of the broken law, what was that indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, that were due to the sin of man. Here the seed of the woman maintained a combat with that great serpent, the devil, and had his heel bruised; that is, his lower nature filled with anguish. And it is most probable, that his nature being worn out with this load of distress, was the true reason why he expired on the cross much sooner than was expected, so that *Pilate marvelled to hear that he was already dead*; Mark xv. 44.

I think it is impossible for the Socinians, who represent the death of Christ chiefly as a martyrdom for the truth of his doctrine, and an example of patience in suffering, to support their

scheme against this argument, or to give any tolerable account of this amazement which possessed his spirit before his enemies came near him, and of these agonies of soul which our blessed Lord sustained. Surely such sorrows and such terrors demonstrate the work of propitiation and the dreadful labour of reconciling an offended God and sinful man.

VII. This doctrine of satisfaction for sin by the death of Christ is declared, and confirmed, and explained at large by the apostles in their writings, when they were fully furnished for their ministry, by the gifts of the Holy Ghost. Read St. Paul's letters to the churches, and you find them abounding in such expressions as these: *Christ died for our sins*; 1 Cor. xv. 3. *He gave himself for us, to redeem us from all iniquity;* Tit. ii. 13. *We have redemption through his blood;* Eph. i. 7. *God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them. He was made sin;* 2 Cor. v. 19, 21. *And he was made a curse for us;* Gal. iii. 13. *He is our propitiation and atonement;* 1 John ii. 2. *He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself;* Heb. ix. 26. *When we were enemies we were reconciled to God by his death;* Rom. v. 10. *He made peace by the blood of his cross;* Col. i. 20. *He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification*; Rom. iii. 25. *By the righteousness of one man, the free gift came upon all men to justification of life. By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous;* Rom. v. 18, 19.

Now in the writings of St. Paul on this subject, we may observe three things.

1. He speaks this language, when in a plain doctrinal way he is teaching the gospel of Christ, therefore these expressions of his are to be understood in the common sense and meaning of the words. It would be a very great force and torture put upon these expressions, if we construe them only to mean, that God promised forgiveness to penitent sinners by Jesus Christ, as a messenger of grace, and that Christ died as a martyr to bear witness to this truth. Read his epistles to the Romans, the Ephesians, the Colossians, and the Hebrews, where he treats of these subjects, and you will find that the apostle in his doctrine of atonement, means much more than this; for he talks in a plain rational and argumentative style and method, to inform the minds of men, of the true design of the death of Christ, and give them the clear knowledge of the truth.

2. He not only represents the death of Christ as our atonement for sin, but he declares this to be the great end of his appearing in the flesh. Heb. ii. 14. *Because the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he himself also took part of the same,*

mises, and prophecies, in narratives and plain instructions, in darker or brighter discoveries from the beginning of mankind.

If I forsake the gospel of Christ, and his atonement for sin, whither shall my guilty conscience fly to find a better relief? This is the doctrine that supplies the chiefest wants of a guilty creature, and the chief defects of natural light and reason. Nature shews me no way to recompense the justice of God for my innumerable sins. Nature shews me nothing which God will accept in the room of my own perfect obedience, or in the room of my everlasting punishment. If I leave thee, O Jesus, whither should I go? Thy sufferings are the spring of my hope of pardon, and my eternal life depends on thy painful and shameful death.

I see and obtain in this gospel of atonement all that the heathen world laboured for in vain, by many wild inventions, and painful superstitions. The anger of the God of heaven is pacified by the sufferings of Jesus his Son. O my God, let my soul never run back to infidelity and heathenism, and rove abroad among the foolish inventions of men, in quest of any other methods of atonement. The blood of Jesus is all my hope.

Here I see the gracious promises of ancient times fulfilled, even the first promise of mercy that was ever made to fallen man. Here I behold the accomplishment of the predictions of the holy prophets since the world began; 1 Pet. i. 11. "It was the Spirit of Christ spake in them, concerning the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow; Gen. iii. 15. Here I see "the seed of the woman breaking the head of the serpent;" 1 John iii. 8. *The Son of God manifested*, and by his own death, *destroyed the works of the devil.* Here I behold; *Dan.* ix. 24, 26. the Messiah *cut off, but not for himself.* I behold him here on his cross, *finishing* iniquity, *transgression, and sin*; and *bringing in everlasting righteousness.* I see, Is. liii. 10. *his soul made an offering for* the *sins* of men: And the prophets Isaiah and Daniel conspiring with the blessed apostles to point to Jesus as an all-sufficient Saviour.

I see the types and shadows of the Jewish religion so happily answered in this doctrine of the priesthood and sacrifice of Christ, that I am well assured that this is the substance, for it bears the shape and lineaments of the shadow. This is the great original; for it carries the exact resemblance of the types and pictures that went before. The ancient religion of emblems and figures was confirmed by the amazing wonders of Moses; but the religion of Christ, which contains in it the substance and true glory of all former dispensations, is not only attested by the miracles of the Son of God, but he himself also appears in the midst of it, in so

divine a correspondence with the typical ordinances of Moses, as gives a double and most undoubted confirmation to his own blessed gospel, and his own atonement for sin. Every thing that established the religion of the Jews, serves to establish me in the religion of Christ. Their lavers and washings, their altars and sacrifices were divine; but they were divine only for a season. These ancient veils which covered the gospel, were of God's own contrivance; and when they were exhibited to the people, especially in the days of Moses and Solomon, they made a bright and sacred appearance; but now the gospel stands forth unveiled, and in perfect light, God himself hath folded up these veils as an old garment, and laid them aside. The substance is come, and the shadows disappear. Blessed be the Lord that I was brought forth since the Sun of Righteousness is risen upon the earth, and the morning clouds are vanished away.

I hear Jesus, my great Prophet, preaching this doctrine of propitiation for our sins by his death, in his own ministry; though he was content to do it in a more obscure and imperfect manner: And I now see the reason why he taught this truth chiefly in parables, because it was not proper in that age to be published to the multitude in plain language, till he had actually died and rose again.

I behold his terrible agonies in the garden, before he came near the cross. I see the blessed Son of God labouring under the burden of our guilt, wrestling, and sweating blood, under the unknown impressions of that tribulation and wrath, that indignation and anguish which was due to my sins. What else could make so glorious and divine a person discover such dreadful distress of soul? Again, he cries out on the cross with anguish of spirit, he bleeds, he groans, he dies. I acknowledge the truth of the doctrine of his atonement. I read it in all his agonies. These are such sufferings, and such sorrows as are beyond all that men could inflict, or that a mere man could bear, beyond all the common terrors of death and the grave. My Saviour sustained a heavier burden, and was engaged in harder work; a labour more dreadful and more glorious. He was then making atonement to divine justice for my sins. And blessed be his name for ever and ever.

I read the same doctrine of atonement for sin, by the death of Christ, in the writings of his holy apostles. This was the gospel which they preached to the Jews, and to the rest of the nations. This they delivered down in the sacred records of the New Testament, whence we derive our religion and our hope. The language in which they expressed our reconciliation to God, by the death of Christ, carries with it such evidence, and such

strength, that if I believe these books to be divine, I cannot but receive this doctrine as the truth of God; and I would learn of St. Paul; Gal. vi. 14. *to glory in the cross of Christ;* and—ii. 20. to *live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*

When I read the astonishing gifts of the blessed Spirit, communicated to the first preachers and professors of the gospel, when I survey these gifts in all their extensive glory, and in all their force of argument, I look upon all of them as a heap of united wonders, conspiring to support this doctrine of the propitiation of Christ, which was every where taught by these inspired favourites of heaven. Every strange tongue which they spoke, teaches me this blessed truth. Every disease of body which they healed, assures me, that the stripes which Christ sustained, were for the healing of our souls. Every unclean spirit which they cast out, establishes my belief, that by the atoning death of Christ we are delivered from the power of the devil. Every surprising wonder which they wrought, gives me a firmer persuasion of this wondrous doctrine, that the Son of God died to give us life.

Blessed Saviour, let the same spirit, by whose influence they healed the sick, they cast out devils, and wrought all these wonders, write this holy religion, and this doctrine of thy atonement for sins deep in my heart. O let me make it my daily food, the support and the life of my soul. Teach me to apply it to all the holy purposes for which so glorious a doctrine was revealed to the world. In the faith of this atonement, by the blood of Jesus, let me join in the songs of angels, and pronounce with joy; Luke ii. 14. *Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good-will to men;* Glory to God my Father, and my Saviour: Pardon, life, and salvation to dying sinners. *Amen.*

HYMN FOR SERMON XXXV.

Faith and Repentance encouraged by the Sacrifice of Christ.

WHERE shall the guilty conscience go
To find a sure relief?
Can bleeding bulls or goats bestow
A balm to ease my grief?

Will popish rites and penances,
Release my soul from sin?
What insufficient things are these
To calm the wrath divine!

God, the great God, who rules the skies,
The gracious and the just,
Makes his own Son our sacrifice:
And there lies all our trust.

O never let my thoughts renounce
The gospel of my God,
Where vilest crimes are cleans'd at once
In Christ's atoning blood.

Here rest my faith, and ne'er remove;
Here let repentance rise,
While I behold his bleeding love,
His dying agonies.

With shame and sorrow here I own
How great my guilt has been;
This is my way t' approach the throne,
And God forgives my sin.

SERMON XXXVI.

The Use of the foregoing Sermons, with intermingled Reflections.

Rom. iii. 25.—Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation——

THIS glorious doctrine of the propitiation of Christ, has been explained and proved at large in the former discourses. It remains that we shew the proper uses of it. If we would set our thoughts at work to draw inferences, we might derive thence many truths, as well as duties. But as my chief design is to promote practical godliness, I shall content myself with mentioning two doctrinal inferences, and all the rest shall more immediately direct our practice.

First doctrinal inference. How vain are all the labours and pretences of mankind, sinful, guilty mankind, to seek or hope for any better religion than that which is contained in the gospel of Christ! It is here alone, that we can find the solid and rational principles of reconciliation to an offended God. This doctrine of atonement for sin by the sufferings of Christ, is a substantial ground for our establishment in christianity, and should be an effectual persuasive, to continue in the profession of the gospel; Heb. iv. 14. *Having such a High-priest as Jesus the Son of God, who after he had died for our sins, rose again, and entered into heaven, let us hold fast our profession.* All the religions that God ever appointed for fallen man, meet and centre here. If you have any regard to reason and argument, if you would follow the dictates of revelation, or if you would seek the peace and happiness of your souls, never, never forsake the religion of Jesus.

Reflection.—" My soul, hast thou heard this doctrine of the propitiation of Christ, and the arguments that support it in the last discourse? Dost thou receive, dost thou believe this great article of faith? Hold it fast then, and live upon it continually. Never hope to find a surer spring of pardon, nor a sweeter relief for a guilty conscience. Maintain this hope, and hold fast thy bible, where this blessing is discovered to men. Keep upon thy spirit a due sense and relish of this atonement for sin: It will be a blessed guard against infidelity, and assist thee to stand in an hour of temptation, against the cavils of men, who have renounced the gospel of God.

"But remember, O my soul, that if thou sin wilfully against this gospel, that is, if thou abandon this grace, and reject it utterly with contempt and opposition, *after thou hast received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries*; Heb. x. 26, 27. This scripture seems to stand like a divine engine, charged with vengeance and eternal death, and pointed not only against the primitive apostates, but against some of the profane infidels and scoffers of our age, who have renounced, reproached, and ridiculed the gospel which they once professed. Remember also, that it carries in it a very dangerous and threatening aspect, upon those who continue to profess the religion of the bible, but cancel out of it the doctrine of the atonement of Christ; for there remains no other sacrifice. Have a care, therefore, O my soul, and stand at a distance from their company, who deny the propitiatory virtue of the blood of Christ! Let them find a better ground to build their hopes of pardon upon: But do thou lay thy foundation *on this rock, and the powers of hell shall not prevail against it.*

Second doctrinal inference.—How strange and unreasonable is the doctrine of the popish church, who while they profess to believe the religion of Christ, yet introduce many other methods of atonement for sin beside the sufferings of the Son of God, and the atonement which Jesus has made.

Every time they celebrate the Lord's-supper, and the priest communicates the consecrated bread to his deluded followers, they suppose there is a fresh propitiation made for sin: Therefore they call it the sacrifice of the mass, and imagine that their unscriptural representation of this holy ordinance, is a real propitiation, not only for the sins of the living, but for those that are dead also. Whereas St. Paul assures us; Heb. ix. 28.—*Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many.* Heb. x. 14. *By one offering he hath for ever perfected them that are sanctified.* I confess, this practice, of theirs in the mass, looks something like a pretence of honour, to the name and death of Christ; because, they declare, the mass is but, as it were, a repetition of the very sacrifice of Christ himself: Though that is expressly contrary to the language of scripture; for "this man Jesus, after he had offered one sacrifice for sin, for ever sat down at the right-hand of God;" Heb. x. 12. because his single sacrifice was all-sufficient, and needs no repetition.

But, besides this, they have many other methods of atonement which men perform, and which they add to the atonement of Christ. What are all their imposed penances, their pilgrimages on bare feet, the scourgings of their own bodies, the gar-

ments of hair worn upon their flesh, and their multitudes of repeated latin prayers? What are they all but toilsome and painful labours, invented by men, to make atonement for the sins of the soul?

Reflection.—" Blessed be the name of our God, who has delivered our nation from this bondage of iniquity, from these foolish yokes and burdens of superstition; these profane dishonours done to the sacrifice and atonement of Jesus our Saviour. We are ready to look on popery now as lying afar off, across the seas, as an evil thing at a great distance, and are not so much impressed with a grateful sense of our preservation from it. We are too soon forgetful of our narrow escape from this mischief, by the late revolution, and the protestant succession; by the arm of God, and by the two best of kings, William our deliverer, and George our defender. Had it not been for these providences of heaven, and these princes on earth, our land might have been filled with these superstitions, and they might have been imposed on us, under the penalties of imprisonment and poverty, torment and death. And how could we stand in the fiery trial? Awake, O my heart, and let my tongue awake into songs of praise and salvation, that I am not tempted or compelled to disgrace the blood of my Saviour by having other atonements for sin imposed on my conscience. And in the midst of thy praises to God, O my soul, drop a tear of pity on thy brethren, who dwell in the midst of these temptations, and in the language of christian sympathy, lift up a groan to heaven for them, and say, *How long, O Lord, how long?*

But let my thoughts return home from the popish countries and their superstitions. It is not enough for me to renounce the inventions of men, as any part of my righteousness, to procure my pardon and acceptance in the sight of God, but even the duties which God himself has required, the duties of faith and love, of repentance and new obedience, must never stand in the room of the atonement of Christ. They are all poor defective works, and want to be sprinkled with the blood of his sacrifice! They were never designed to join with the obedience of Christ, in procuring the favour of an offended God. Have a care, therefore, O my soul, of resting in the best of thy holy services, or of making them a matter of merit, to introduce thee before his presence. When thou art raised nearest to heaven in the practice of christian graces and duties, fall down before the throne, confess thy unworthiness, and say; Ps. cxxx. 3, 4. *If thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, who can stand?* But *there is forgiveness with thee*, and plentiful redemption by the blood of Jesus. There lies all my hope.

Thus I have finished the two inferences for instruction, I

proceed now to those which more immediately relate to our practice. This blessed doctrine of the atonement of Christ, runs like a golden thread through the whole of our religion: It unites the several parts of it in a sweet harmony, and casts a lustre over them all. Let us then particularly survey some of the various practical uses to which it may be applied.

1. It is a solid foundation, on which the greatest of sinners may hope for acceptance with God, when they return to him: It is a sufficient ground for their firm trust in Christ as a Saviour, and a reviving cordial against sinking in despair.

Let the crimes of a creature be never so great and heinous, yet the atonement of the Son of God is equal to them all. Let the defilements and stains of the soul be never so deep and crimson, the blood of Christ has a strange and divine virtue to wash them away, and to make the sinner white as snow, even in the sight of a holy God. Rev. vii. 14. *They washed their garments, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. This is a faithful saying*, as St. Paul tells Timothy, *and worthy of all acceptation, Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief*; 1 Tim. i. 15. And our Saviour assures us, *All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven to men*; Mat. xii. 14. because that he knew that he could make compensation to divine Justice for all this guilt. Therefore all sorts of blasphemers and criminals shall be forgiven, but those who blaspheme the Holy Spirit in his highest attestations to this gospel, and utterly refuse this atonement of Christ. 1 John i. 7. *The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin*; it is a divine sacrifice, and all-sufficient propitiation, extensive as our iniquities.

Jesus is an able and an almighty Saviour, so that the vilest of sinners need not despair, if they are but willing to return to God, and come unto him, that they may be saved in his own way. The deepest wounds that were ever made in the conscience by sins, against light, and against love, sins of long continuance, sins of old obstinacy and repeated backslidings, sins of the blackest aggravations, may all be healed by applying the blood of Christ. Awake, arise, O sinner, fly to the hope that is set before thee? In vain will you try a thousand remedies, this is the only relief. A soul stung with the guilt of sin, as with a fiery serpent, must look up to Jesus hanging on the cross, there alone can he find healing and life.

Reflection.—" And what is my state? and what is my present case? Am I a sinner under the first awakenings of conscience? Is my spirit filled with dreadful apprehensions of an offended God, and of a law that pronounceth curses and death? Am I enquiring, What shall I do to flee from the wrath to come? Does the load of all my past offences lie heavy upon me? Are

my sins gone over my head as a heavy burden, too heavy for me to bear? Does Satan the tempter and the accuser, terrify and hurry me with despairing thoughts? Does he tell me that my crimes are too big to be forgiven? But Satan is *a liar from the beginning*. The gospel of Christ is divinely true. I come to Jesus as a great High-priest in the blood of his atonement: I come *weary and heavy laden*, under a sense of the guilt of past sins, and the remaining power of them in my soul. O Jesus fulfil thy promise, and give rest to my labouring and wounded spirit! Speak a word of peace and pardon to a sinking creature, and raise and receive him to hope and salvation. I am worthy to perish for ever, but thy death is worthy to procure life for me. Here I rest my heavy-laden soul, and with humble hope I wait for thy mercy.

"Or, am I a professor of religion that have fallen under great decays and wretched backslidings? Are old terrors and agonies returned upon my conscience with redoubled smart and anguish? Do I see my guilt? My shameful wanderings, my loathsome iniquities? Do I seem as it were to be cast out from God? And does he seem to shut the door of heaven against my prayers? Yet I will not despair: I will come in the name of Jesus the great atonement. Wash my guilty soul, O blessed Redeemer, with thy blood, and I will look again toward the holy temple. I will lift up a humble eye toward an offended God. Thy sacrifice is ever fresh in the power and virtue of it. The *Lamb as it had been slain*, appears in heaven with the marks of his sacrifice. I return with a broken heart to my heavenly Father: I return trembling and hoping in the merit of that everlasting atonement, and wait for restoring grace.

"Or, am I endeavouring to walk closely with my God, in all the duties of holiness, but daily infirmities break out, daily follies and guilt attend me? I make sore complaints indeed, because of the perpetual workings of indwelling sin; yet I will not despair. I love the word of God, and I read it to keep me from sinning: But St. John assures me *if any man sin* through the weakness of nature, and the prevalence of daily temptations, *we have an advocate with the Father, even Jesus the righteous*; 1 John ii. 1, 2. And he is an effectual Advocate, because he is a propitiation for our sins; and he pleads in the virtue of his own blood. O may I ever maintain a constant exercise of faith on the Son of God, as my great High-priest! May I keep up a lively and delightful sense of the all-sufficiency of his atonement upon my spirit, that this which is the glory of my religion, may also be the daily life of my soul."

II. This doctrine of atonement for sin, should be used as a powerful motive to excite repentance in every heart where sin

hath dwelt. Repentance and forgiveness are joined together in the commission of our exalted Saviour; *Acts* v. 31. Grace is a sweet and constraining motive to duty. There is abundant encouragement for sinners to repent and mourn before God for their past transgressions, because the blood of Jesus has provided pardon for them. 1 John i. 9. *If we confess our sins, God is faithful* to his own word, and *just and true* to his Son Jesus, *to forgive such* offenders, *and his blood will cleanse us from our sins.* The fallen angels are not called and encouraged by divine mercy, to repent of their heinous rebellions; for there is no Saviour, there is no atoning sacrifice provided for them.

Reflection.—" And is there such an atonement made? And are there such pardons provided for such guilty wretches as I have been? Is God reconciling himself to men, and reconciling men to himself, by the blood of Jesus? Then let my soul mourn for all her follies, all her past iniquities. Let me be covered with shame, and lie in the dust at the foot of God. O let him speak peace and forgiveness to me, through the blood of Christ. I remember my guilt, and am confounded, and open my mouth no more to vindicate myself: I am overwhelmed with this amazing instance of divine love: God has sent his Son to die for me, and is pacified toward me, for all that I have done against him. O wretched creature that I am, that ever I should rebel against a God of such compassion! Against a God, who all this while had such kind designs towards me, and was making his own way to reconciliation and peace, through the blood of his own Son! I find now by sweet experience, what I have been often told by other christians, that the most kindly workings of true repentance, arise from the sense of a forgiving God, and a dying Saviour."

III. Let us use this atonement of Christ, as our constant way of access to God in all our prayers. This is the only safe method of address to the mercy-seat: It is ordained for this very purpose, to help a sinner near to God; Heb. x. 19, 21, 22.—*Having therefore, brethren, boldness to come into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,—and having a High-priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart.* He is ascended to heaven before us, he is entered within the veil in virtue of his sacrifice: he has bespoke acceptance for our persons before the throne, and a favourable audience for all our prayers. Whatsoever we ask of the Father, we must ask it in his name, and especially in the name and virtue of his great atonement: All the blessings that God has to bestow, are purchased by his sufferings.

Reflection.—" Remember, O my soul, and be humble; remember thou canst not be a welcome guest even at the throne of grace, unless thou art sprinkled with the blood of Jesus. The

God whom thou hast offended, is a great God, and a terrible, a God of holiness, like a devouring fire; a God of awful majesty and severe justice, who will by no means clear the guilty, without some recompence for his broken law. Dare not to approach him therefore, but under the protection of the blood of his Son: Christ is set forth as our propitiation through faith in his blood. If thou bring the atonement of Christ in the hand of thy faith, thou shalt find sweet and easy access: And when thou art filled with inward sorrows, thou mayest pour them all out, and spread thy complaints and thy burdens before the eyes of thy God, with inward consolation and hope.

"Lord, I have sinned, but thy Son has suffered: I come to the throne of grace in his name. My offences cry for vengeance, but the blood of Jesus speaks better things, and cries louder for peace and pardon. Let the voice of that blood which has made full satisfaction for the vilest sins, prevail over all my unworthiness. Let the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne be honoured this day, by introducing a guilty creature with all his complaints and sorrows into thy awful presence, and thy divine favour. Let me obtain grace in the hour of my distress and necessity: And, O that I may find such success, and such ease of soul, in drawing near to God by the blood of Christ, that on all occasions I may run to this refuge, and maintain humble and constant communion with God my Father, in this new and living way of access. May this earthly and foolish spirit of mine, never be such a stranger as it has been at the mercy-seat, since the door of approach is always open, since I have so glorious an introducer."

IV. We should use this atonement of Christ, as a divine guard against temptation and sin; 1 Pet. i. 15, 18, 19. *As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation—for ye are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.*

Reflection.—"And has this soul of mine, which was in slavery to sin and the power of Satan, been redeemed by the death of the Son of God? and shall I run back to my old slavery, and give myself up again to the reign and tyranny of sin? Has this guilty and polluted soul been washed in so precious a laver as the blood of the Son of God? And shall I defile myself again? Shall I "return with the dog to his vomit, or with the swine that was was washed, to her wallowing in the mire?" 2 Pet. ii. 22. It was sin that cost my Redeemer so dear, that cost him agonies and death: And shall I indulge such an enemy in my heart, and obey it in my practice? "God forbid! How shall I that am dead to sin, by my interest in a dying Saviour, live any longer therein?" Rom. vi. 2. It is a scandal and reproach

to this blessed doctrine of atonement, if I should ever dare give a loose to my iniquities, while I profess faith in the blood of Christ. Grant, O Jesus, that I may never turn this adorable grace of thine into wantonness."

V. The atonement of Christ is an argument of prevailing force to be used in prayer, when we plead for the aids of the blessed Spirit; when we ask for his sacred influences to enlighten, to sanctify, or to comfort our souls. The Spirit flows down to us in the blood of Christ.

Reflection.—" Holy Father, thou hast not withheld thy Son Jesus, but hast given him to die for me, and wilt thou not give me thy Spirit to live in me, and to raise me to a divine life? Even when I was dead in trespasses and sins, my blessed Saviour poured out his own soul to death, that I might be recovered to thy favour; and shall I not have thy image impressed upon me by the Spirit, that I may appear before thee in the beauty of holiness? Shall I be sprinkled with the blood of Christ, and have my errors forgiven, and shall I not have divine light bestowed upon me, that I may not wander afresh in the ways of error and darkness! Is my guilt cancelled, and are my iniquities removed by the great atonement of the Son of God, and wilt thou not bestow thy sanctifying Spirit upon me, to guard me from renewed guilt and fresh iniquities? Lord, have I not fled to lay hold on the hope set before me? Hast thou not forgiven all my sins? And shall not the Spirit the Comforter, speak peace to my soul, and fill me with hope and joy in believing? Wilt thou deny thy Spirit to any creature, for whom thy Son has poured out his invaluable life and blood?"

[If this sermon be too long, here is a proper pause.]

How great and desirable are the advantages that we have found already to be derived from this gospel of atonement? May our souls possess and improve them all? But there are still more treasures of divine grace to be dug out of this golden mine: It is an inexhausted fountain of duties and blessings. I proceed therefore to point out more of them to the eye of faith.

VI. We should use this doctrine of propitiation for sin by the death of Christ, as an everlasting spring of holy love to God the Father, and to his Son Jesus Christ. Great and unspeakable was the love of God the Father; 1 John iv. 10. " Herein is love; not that we loved him, but he hath loved us, and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins." Great and unspeakable is the love of Jesus the Saviour; "it has heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths in it which pass our knowledge;" Eph. iii. 18. For, " when we were enemies, he died to reconcile us to God;" Rom. v. 10. The great and blessed

God had no richer gift than his Son, and he bestowed his Son upon us. Christ Jesus himself made his flesh and soul an offering for our sins. It was a spring of divine love that arose from the bosom of God, and runs through all this sacred transaction in many blessed streams: It runs through all the length of time into a long eternity. How should this melt and soften our hearts, into returns of love to the great God, and to his Son Jesus Christ. *We love him*, saith the beloved apostle, *because he first loved us;* 1 John iv. 19.

Reflection.—" And what shall I do to raise my love to God my Father, and my blessed Redeemer? When I was a stranger and an enemy, God reconciled me to himself, by sending his Son to die for me. How hard is this wretched heart of mine, that it feels no more powerful impressions from this amazing love and compassion of God to a rebel creature? What sorrows, what indignities, what bitter scoffs, what loads of reproach, what inward and unknown agonies of soul, what a shameful and painful and cursed death, did the blessed Son of God endure for my sake: And can I forbear to love him? Alas! how cold are my affections! How feeble and languid is my zeal! What poor sorry returns do I make for these infinite condescensions of divine love! Warm my heart, O Jesus with this love, and inflame all my affections. O may all the powers of my soul exert their utmost diligence in the service of the Son of God, that has redeemed me! His love was stronger than death: and shall it not constrain me to love him? Did he lay down his life for my sake, and shall I not lay out and employ my life with all my talents and capacities to his honour? Blessed Jesus, I grieve, I mourn, I am confounded that I feel no more of the constraining influences of thy dying love, to make all my duty and obedience easy and delightful."

VII. This doctrine carries in it a strong persuasive to that love and pity which we should shew on all occasions to our fellow-creatures. When the apostle John had magnified the love of God, in that he had sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins: He makes this inference, *Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another;* 1 John iv. 11. And in the foregoing chapter, iii. 16. he raises this inference of love to a sublime degree: *Because God hath laid down his life for us, we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.* But how can any person make a pretence to christianity, who *hath the goods of this world, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him?* verse 17. How can such an hardened and cruel heart pretend that the love of God dwells there?

This blessed truth of the forgiveness of sin through the propitiation of Christ, demands of us the duties of forbearance and forgiveness, of kindness and tenderness to men. "Be ye kind one to another, and tender-hearted, forgiving one another even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you;" Eph. iv. 32. Shall Christians bite and devour each other, shall they rage against each other with bitter reproaches, shall they quarrel, and grieve, and wound each other who were once fellow-slaves in the chains of guilt, and death, and were redeemed together by the voluntary death of the Son of God? Shall they who have known and tasted such divine compassion, imitate the rage, and malice, and envy of hell, rather than the heavenly example of the blessed Jesus?

Reflection.—"And hast thou never felt the influence of this divine truth, O my soul, this blessed doctrine of atoning love? Dost thou swell with anger? Dost thou resent every supposed injury? Dost thou indulge a spirit of revenge? And do thy thoughts contrive mischief to men, while the thoughts of the Son of God are all tenderness and compassion towards thee? Had he resented all thy iniquities, had he meditated vengeance for all thy crimes, he had never laid down his life to rescue thee from hell, and thy state and thy case had been miserable without hope.

"Hast thou no pity for the poor, when their necessities and groans cry aloud for thy relief? The Son of God did not deal thus with thee: He expended the riches of his love upon thee, even his unsearchable riches of grace: And when no other price was sufficient to redeem thee from death, he gave up himself for thee, and made his own soul an offering for thy sins.—Remember therefore, when provocations to anger are set before thee, and thou feelest the inward rising passion, remember the death and love of the Son of God, remember the price of thy forgiveness."

VIII. Patience under heavy afflictions, is another divine lesson that we should learn from this doctrine of the atoning death of Christ; and not patience only, but holy joy in the midst of earthly sorrows may be derived from the same spring. Rom. v. 1, 2, 3, 8. "Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ;—we rejoice in hope of the glory of God; and not only so, but we glory in tribulations,—because God has commended his love towards us at this rate, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us."

Reflection.—"Why then should my spirit be overwhelmed under the troubles of this life? Surely the mercies which I enjoy are infinitely greater than all my sorrows. God has redeemed my soul from hell by the blood of his Son. Lord, I would

suppress all repining thoughts; I am humble, I am thankful; and though thou visitest me with chastisements, to reduce me from my follies, thou hast not laid on me the burden of my sins, nor called me to the hard and dreadful work of answering the severe demands of thy broken law. This burden thy own Son has borne; this work he has performed. *The cup of common sorrows which my heavenly Father puts into my hand, shall I not drink it!* It is not a cup of such anguish and terror as the Son of God drank up for my sake. Why should a creature saved from hell, be impatient and uneasy at any of the little sufferings which he sustains here on earth!

"This is not only a powerful argument to compose my soul to resignation under troubles; but even to raise me to holy joy. Surely he that has loved me, and has given his own Son up to death for me, does not afflict me willingly, nor grieve my spirit beyond what he sees necessary. He transacts all his affairs with me according to that covenant of love whereby he ordained his Son to die for me; and he will bestow upon me every good thing in its proper season: *He that spared not his own Son, but gave him up to die for us, shall he not with him freely give us all things*; Rom. viii. 32.

"Bless the name of thy God, O my soul, let my heart be filled with thankfulness, and my lips with praise: He has distinguished thee, my soul, by peculiar blessings. He has made no such preparation of an atonement for angels, those heavenly creatures, when they sinned against him, but they are cast down into chains of darkness, and why am not I cast into chains of darkness too? He has not revealed this grace to several large heathen nations: They know nothing of a Redeemer: But he has revealed his Son to me, in the glory and grace of his atonement He has raised me to the hope of eternal life, by the death and the resurrection of Jesus his Son. Let all my murmurings and impatience be silent for ever. The worst of *my present sufferings are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed*, the glory purchased by the sufferings of Christ; Rom. viii. 18.

IX. The doctrine of the atonement of Christ gives us a blessed invitation to the Lord's-supper, where Christ crucified is set forth before us in the memorials of his propitiation.

The propitiation of Christ is of so constant and universal use in the whole of our religion, that our blessed Lord would not suffer us to live without some sensible tokens and signs of it, and these are to be frequently repeated to the end of the world; and therefore he has given a most express and positive command; *Luke* xxii. 19. *This do in remembrance of me.* And the

apostle Paul; 1 *Cor.* xi. 29. where he teaches the Corinthians this ordinance, assures them, *As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.* Our blessed Lord has not given us such a peculiar memorial of any of his other actions or offices as he has of his priesthood and sacrifice.

Reflection.—" And shall I not do honour to the memory of my dying Saviour? Shall I refuse to remember my great High-priest, and his propitiation for sin, in the way and manner in which he has enjoined me? Do I not trust in the death of Christ for my salvation, and shall I not glory in his cross, and profess it before the world? Do I not stand in daily need of this bread of life which was broken for my sake, and shall I reject the memorials of his broken body, when his flesh and spirit were made an offering for my guilt: Do I not hope for forgiveness through his blood, and shall I not drink this cup of reconciliation which he has mingled! I have learned by the gospel, the excellency and virtue of the propitiation of Christ, to cancel my iniquities, and shall I not receive this propitiation in all the methods of his own apppointment? Shall I dare to say, it is enough for me to read it in the bible, and to hear it in the ministry of the word, and to meditate on it in private, when my Lord has given me an express command to receive it also in those emblems and sensible figures of bread and wine, and has sanctified them for this very purpose? Is this a kind return to him that died for me?

" Blessed Redeemer, forgive all my omissions, my delays my careless or slothful neglects of this holy ordinance of thine, and all my sinful indifferency about it. O scatter all my doubts, banish all my excuses, and bring me to thy holy table as a penitent and humble disciple, as a worthy and joyful receiver; there let me join with my fellow-christians and remember thy dying love."

X. We may use this doctrine as our most effectual defence against the terrors of dying; and as our joyful hope of a blessed resurrection.

The atonement of Christ is a divine support in the agonies of death. At such a season a thousand past iniquities will sometimes crowd in upon the memory, and fill the soul with horror, and perhaps Satan the accuser makes a dreadful assault upon the conscience at the same time, and torments the spirit with painful agonies: But the most formidable terrors, the sharpest agonies find a relief here, the very sting of death is taken away by the death of Christ; 1 *Cor.* xv. 56. *The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin to condemn us is the law of God: but thanks be to God through Christ Jesus,* who hath answered the

demands of the condemning law, and taken away the sting of death by his atoning sacrifice.

We may now venture into the presence of a holy and righteous God, laying fresh hold of the atonement in a dying hour by a living faith, and having our departing spirits sprinkled with the blood of Christ. It was this very blood in the virtue of which Jesus himself was raised from the dead; *Heb.* xiii. 20. *The God of peace brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant.* It was in the virtue of this blood that he ascended and appeared before God in heaven; *Heb.* ix. 12. *Christ by his own blood entered into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.*

Did the cursed guilt of our sins bring the Son of God down from heaven to earth, did it smite him to death, and lay him low in the grave? But the power of his complete atonement has broken the bonds of death and the grave; this has brought him back to life again, and has raised him from earth to heaven; and by the same blood of his cross he has opened an effectual way for our rising from the dead, and our final admission into the place of blessedness. As Aaron the Jewish high-priest might not dare to venture into the holy of holies without the blood of expiation, so Christ our great High-priest, when he had once taken our sins upon him, might not ascend to heaven into the presence of God, till in the language of scripture he could carry his blood with him, till he could shew a full atonement. Now that very same blood and sacrifice which gave Christ himself a joyful admission into heaven, who was the great Shepherd and the Representative of his people, will also give every one of his sheep a safe and glorious entrance into the presence of God. This we may hope for with a chearful heart, when our departing spirits are called away from this lower world. And for the further joy of our faith, we should remember also, that in the virtue of the same blood we shall be raised from the grave: The grave shall obey the voice of him that died for us; for he has ransomed us from the power of it. Then the soul and body of every disciple of Christ shall be introduced with divine acceptance to dwell where Jesus is, and *to behold his glory*; John xvii. 24.

Reflection.—" Why then art thou so terrified, O my soul, at the thoughts of dying? Why all these sudderings of the flesh, and these agonies of spirit at the apprehensions of death and the grave? Are the sins of thy life great and numerous? Do they throng in upon thy conscience, and fill thy thoughts with tumult and terror? Remember the time, the dark and dismal hour, when

Jesus thy Saviour bore all those very sins in his own body on the tree: There the demands of Divine Justice were all answered, and sin has now no power to condemn the saint, nor has death power to hurt him in his best interests; Rom. viii. 34. "Who shall condemn? It is Christ that died, yea, rather has risen again, as a complete conqueror over death." And is not Christ thy Head, thy Redeemer and the Captain of thy salvation?

"Let me call to mind the solemn seasons of transaction between Christ and my soul. Have I not resigned myself to him as an all-sufficient Saviour, to deliver me both from the guilt and the power of every sin? Have I not trusted in the blood of his atonement, and felt the quickening power of his Spirit as the fruit of his blood? Has he not raised me to a new life? What if the mortal body must die, because it has sin in it, yet my Spirit shall live because Christ is my righteousness. Fear not then, O my soul, but go chearfully through the gates of death when he calleth thee. Jesus has taken away the terrors of that dark passage. He has deprived death of its sting, and sanctified the grave for a sweet sleeping place. Awaken all the powers of thy faith, and triumph over the conquered enemy. The justice of God is become thy friend, and death can do no mischief to the friends of God, reconciled by the blood of Jesus. Look forward and behold thy great Fore-runner ready to introduce thee into the presence of *his Father and thy Father, his God and thy God*, with exceeding joy. Bid a joyful farewell to flesh and sense, those busy tempters; farewell to time and this world, and all things that are not divine and holy. Turn thy back on all visible objects, close thine eyes with a smiling countenance, forget earth for ever, and enter into the heavenly mansions."

XI. The view of Christ as our propitiation, is not only a safe defence against the terrors of death, but it is a divine allurement toward the upper world. There lives our dear Redeemer, our blessed and beloved Lord, who ransomed our souls from sin and hell. There he reigns on the throne as king of glory, who once hung on the cross as our sacrifice of atonement: The Lamb of God in the midst of the throne, with the signals of his death upon him. The sight of these signals shall open all our springs of love: Joy, love, and gratitude shall fill the departed spirit: As soon as we are absent from the body, we are present with the Lord who died for us.

Reflection.—"O happy day and happy hour indeed, that shall finish the long absence of my beloved, and place me within sight of my adored Jesus! When shall I see that lovely, that illustrious Friend, who laid down his own life to rescue mine, his own valuable life to ransom a worm, a rebel that deserved to die,

uffered, he groaned, he died: but he rose again, the blessed our arose, he lives, he reigns exalted over all the creation. n beholds him risen, and reigning, but it is through a glass, at a distance, and but darkly. I wait, I hope for a more ie pleasure; it is a delight worth dying for, to behold him to face, to see him as he is, to converse with his wondrous on, and to survey his glories. Alas! my soul is too patient is long distance and separation. O for the wings of love, to my spirit upward in holy breathings! Methinks I would to be near him, to be with him, to give him my highest ies and thanks for my share in his dying love. I would rise in with the blessed acclamations, the holy songs of the saints igh, while they behold their exalted Saviour. How sweet songs! How loud their acclamations! This is the man, God-man who died for me! This is the Son of God, who buffetted, who was crowned with thorns, who endured iisite anguish, and unknown sorrows for me, who was rged, and wounded, and crucified for me! This is the glo- Person, the Lamb of God, who washed me from my sins in wn blood. Blessing, honour, and salvation to his holy name ver." *Amen.*

HYMN FOR SERMON XXXVI.

Christ's Propitiation improved.

), didst thou send thy Son to die
ich a guilty wretch as I?
hall thy mercy not impart
pirit to renew my heart?

hast thou wash'd my garments clean
iu's blood from shame and sin?
I not strive with all my power
iin pollute my soul no more!

I not bear my Father's rod,
ind corrections of my God,
Christ upon the cursed tree
u'd a heavier load for me?

Why should I dread my dying day
Since Christ hath took the curse away,
And taught me with my latest breath
To triumph o'er thy terrors, death?

O rather let me wish and cry,
"When shall my soul get loose and fly
To upper worlds? When shall I see,
The God, the man, that dy'd for me?"

I shall behold his glories there,
And pay him my eternal share
Of praise, and gratitude, and love,
Among ten thousand saints above,

SERMON XXXVII.

The Christian's Treasure.

1 Cor. iii. 21.—All things are yours.

It is a peculiar delight of this apostle to survey the blessings we derive from Christ, and to run over the glories of the gospel in flowing language. At the end of this chapter he reckons up the privileges of the saints, and tells them, they have an interest in all things: "It does not become you, says he, to enter into parties, and to glory in any single man, no, not in Paul, Apollos, nor Cephas, *for all things are yours, whether life or death, whether this world or the other, whether things present or things to come, all are yours.*

To improve this proposition, and to bring it down to some practical purposes, let us consider,

I. What we are to understand by this extensive privilege of true christians, contained in this expression, *All things are yours*; and what is the true limitation of the sense of it.—II.—It shall be proved, that notwithstanding the limited sense of these words, yet the saints have a richer treasure in them, than the greatest riches of a sinner.—III. We shall enquire how christians come to possess such a treasure. And,—IV. See what use may be made of this doctrine:

First, What are we to understand by this expression, *All things are yours?* To answer this enquiry clearly, I am constrained to introduce these two negatives;

1. We are not to suppose here that all things are in the possession of true christians, and under their power. This truth every man is a witness of, that the saints have neither heaven nor earth in their present possession. The sun and stars are not at their command, nor the riches of this world in their chest, nor the kingdoms of this world under their government. No, by no means, for they are most times poor and mean in this world, many of them destitute of the common supports of nature, and the comforts of life. Christ himself their Lord and Master had not where to lay his head: And the apostles, who were the chief of christians, suffered "hunger and thirst, were naked and buffetted; they had sometimes neither food nor

ament, neither rest nor peace, nor any certain dwelling-place;" Cor. iv. 11.

2. And as all things are not in their possession, so neither e we to understand that all things in a civil sense are their right nd property. They have not a just claim and demand the good things which their neighbours possess, nor ought ey to take possession of them, though they had power to o it. It is a very wicked principle which has no countenance from scripture, and has been abused to most unrighteous nd bloody purposes, that dominion is founded in grace, or that e saints have a present civil right to all the earth, and the good ings of it. From this sort of doctrine, some men of furious zeal nd enthusiasm have been tempted to rise and seize on the property of their neighbours. And indeed, all the persecution in the orld upon the account of religion, is built on this principle, that the saints alone have a right to peace and liberty, to honour nd money, and all the good things of this life; and that the eretic and the sinner have no right to any thing." And though ersecutors are very much ashamed to own this doctrine in words, et they confirm it and comment upon it, in all their oppressive nd bloody practices.

But the christian religion knows no such principles; it llows every man's property and interest in the goods of this orld, whether he be a Turk or a Jew, a heathen or a christian, saint or a sinner. It is providence has disposed of these outward things in the civil life, and men become entitled to them, by e laws and agreement of civil society: And thus a rich wicked an may be righteously possessed of a fine house, and purple ament, may have a well spread table, and large lands, and dominions, while a saint may happen to lie at his door destitute of read and clothing.

But in what sense than can it be said, that "all things re theirs."

To give a just answer to this enquiry, we must take notice, at the apostle's first design here, is to shew, that believers need ot be so fond of assuming to themselves a peculiar interest in one inister or another, for they may enjoy the gifts of all; *all are for heir sakes:* And from this single hint he rises high into the prileges of the saints. Not ministers only, as Paul and Cephas, are esigned for their benefit; but all are theirs: All things in heaen or earth, in time, or in eternity, are appointed to do some ervice to them. This therefore I take to be the true sense of my ext, viz. "That all things in the creation of God, all things in ll his vast dominions, which a christian can or shall at any time ave to do with, shall as certainly serve to promote his true nterest, and his final happiness, as though he himself had

sovereign dominion over them, or present possession of them:" Always supposing that the christian maintains his character, and acts in his station becoming the dignity of his holy and heavenly calling.

The plain meaning of the words is, that *all things shall work for the good of the saints.* But the apostle chuses to express this in a noble manner here, and by such an exalted figure of speech as aggrandizes the character of the saints, and raises their dignity: And therefore he represents them as having a property in all things, and speaks sublimely of them, as though they were possessors of heaven and earth. Now the ground on which he builds this manner of speaking, may be set in a just and easy light. We can properly be said to possess nothing but what turns to our account, what is of some service or advantage to us; and therefore in the common language of life, we say, concerning a rich covetous man, "he is a poor wretch, he has nothing, because he receives benefit from so small a part of his estate: And in truth, he has no more than he enjoys or uses." Now the true christian reaps the benefit of all things; and God, the great God, the Possessor of heaven and earth, makes all things work together for the benefit of his people; and in this sense it is that all things are theirs.

All things shall turn to their advantage, either, 1. for the support and comfort of their temporal life; or, 2. for the beginning and improvement of their spiritual life; or, 3. for their possession and enjoyment of life eternal.

But instead of collecting all the treasures and riches of the saints under these three general heads, I shall chuse rather to make a paraphrase on the whole verse of my text, and thus discover the interest that a christian has in the persons and things of earth and heaven. "Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours."

I. The ministers of the gospel are yours.

Is Paul appointed an apostle separated to the gospel by the immediate call of Christ; it is for your sakes, O ye Corinthians, that he was chosen and called! Christ had you in his eye, and upon his heart, when he stopped him in the midst of his fury and persecution; when he overwhelmed him with glory, in the road to Damascus; and from a persecutor, made an apostle of him, and a preacher of the cross of Jesus: For he designed then to send him to Corinth, to call you from heathenism, and to save your souls.

Is Paul a man of learning and of bright parts? Is he endowed with profound knowledge of divine mysteries above his brethren? Is he fit to preach for the conversion of the heathen

world, and to write the great things of God for the church, in all future ages? It is for your sakes, O christians, that he is thus endowed: It is for you, O believers in Great Britain, though you live as it were at the ends of the earth, and in the old age of the world; it is even for you that he was appointed and inspired to write his epistles to Rome, Corinth, and Ephesus, and the rest of the early churches. It is by his writings, that you have been enlightened in the mysteries of Christ, and the wonders of the gospel. Almost seventeen hundred years ago was he made the apostle of the gentiles, and that partly for your sakes. Paul himself is yours.

Was Apollos an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures? It was for you, O primitive christians, that he had the gift of oratory bestowed on him. Has any minister in our age and place of abode a peculiar talent of eloquence, hath he a vivacity of fancy, a strength of expression, a sweet accent, and a commanding voice? It is designed for the conviction and salvation of your souls. Can he thunder like the voice of God or mount Sinai, and flash the terrors of the law, like lightning, upon your consciences? It is to awaken you out of your carnal slumber and security in sin, to make you fly from the wrath to come, and cry out, *What shall I do to be saved?* Can he set the blessings of salvation in a glorious and convincing light? It is to persuade you to accept them. Has he the art of striking the passions, and touching the inward springs of the soul? Can he spread the invitations of grace before you, in alluring language? Can he dissolve his thoughts in the tenderest accents of speech, and moisten his words with his tears? It is all designed as a means, in the hands of the Spirit, to melt your hearts to repentance, and to soften your souls to receive the impressions of the gospel? Has he the holy skill of displaying the glories of our blessed Saviour? Can he set off the miracles of his life? Can he talk of his bleeding and his dying love in the most affecting manner? Can he paint him in the honours of his resurrection, his triumph and his exalted state, in most magnificent colours? It is all for the assistance of your faith, the kindling of your love, and the advancement of your joy. Not Paul only, but Apollos is yours.

Is Cephas or Peter a man of boldness and courage to defend the truths of the gospel, or to speak for Christ amongst infidels? It is to lead you onward as the soldiers of Christ, through the midst of dangers, and to encourage you to face the persecuting world bravely in the profession of the cross.

Or is the character of Cephas, as an instructor of the young, and a condescending preacher to babes? He has this talent given him for your sakes too, to feed you while you were babes in

of the saints, for the work of th
body of Christ."

And as the gifts and grace
are designed for the benefit of tl
stances that attend them, their
daited for the advantage of chr
it; 2Cor. i. 3, 4, 6. "Blessed
Lord Jesus Christ, the Father
comfort, who comforteth us in all
able to comfort them which are
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we be afflicted, it is for your cons
pears to be effectual, when ye end
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Thus whatsoever be the char
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II. This world is yours. N
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for you to give you day-light, that you may work for God: And the evening spreads its long thick shadows over the nations, to determine a time for your repose and refreshment. The darkness and the light are yours, during your continuance in the flesh. When all your work here is done, these lower "heavens shall be folded up like an old garment, as a vesture shall they be changed;" they shall flee away and be no more.

Survey the trees and the fields, how they bring forth food for you. The beasts of the earth grow and are nourished for your conveniency; they were born and live, and die for your support and nourishment. The winds blow to purge the air for you, and to keep it wholesome, while God has appointed you to breathe in it. The fountains bubble, and the rivers flow to quench your thirst. Flax and wool are ordained for your covering, and the silk-worm is set to his shining task, that some of your garments may be soft and easy: *The beasts of the earth are at peace with you, and you are in league with the stones of the field*; Job v. 23. O happy and glorious state of the children of God!

Christ, in his providential management of all things in this world, has a chief regard to his own people. The wicked of the earth who dwell among the saints, come in for a share of the common good things of life, chiefly as they are instruments of the providence of Christ, for some known or unknown benefit to his church.

I might tell you also, that if you are christians indeed, then though your ungodly neighbours may have a rightful civil property in many good things of the world, yet you have a better and sweeter interest in the earthly blessings which you possess. You can taste the love of a Father in them, and the kindness of a reconciled God. They are common benefits to the world, but they are made as it were special blessings to you. They are put into your hand by a better covenant: They are sanctified to your use: The world itself becomes a means to raise your heads towards God. And whereas wealth, and honours, and the plenteous enjoyments of life, become a temptation and a snare to the wicked; and, through the corruption of their natures, divide their souls from God and heaven, the same things are made happy instruments in the hand of the Mediator, to furnish you out for eminent service, and to help you onward to a better world.

III. Life and death are yours. Life, with all the comfortable attendants of it; or even with all its difficulties and vexations, it is still designed for your advantage: And death, as terrible as it is in itself, shall appear to be a benefit to you. But I insist no longer on this head at present, because I design it to be the subject of following discourses.

IV. Things present, whether visible or invisible, and things to come, are all yours.

1. Visible things present are yours. I have shewed you in part already, how the wheels of nature are rolling for you. The lower creation stands and moves for your sakes, for your relief and support, while you are travelling to heaven. The present posture of things in this world, the daily scenes of life are continued or changed and still over-ruled by divine providence for your good. Kingdoms, and laws, and governments, are established among men for your safety: If the world were without all government, and all things run into confusion, the saints, with all their earthly comforts, would become the plunder and property of the wicked continually. The princes of the earth, and the political constitutions of nations, are designed to be a screen and defence to the people of God, who dwell among them: For *if these foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do;* Ps. xi. 3. *The wicked would bend their bow, and make ready their arrow upon the string;* and they would not only in private, but publicly *shoot at the upright in heart;* verse 2. There would be neither life nor safety for a christian. Yet, on the other hand, when Christ, in the course of his providence, brings confusion on states and kingdoms, and when he suffers the wicked of the earth, like wild beasts of the wilderness, to spoil, devour and destroy, it is usually designed by his wisdom, as a season of proper trial for his own people, and that country becomes a scene of their glorious sufferings. Christ, who is the head over all things, sets up and pulls down tyrants or good princes, as may best serve the counsels of his Father's mercy, and his own kind designs for his chosen and redeemed people.

And as the whole world of nature, and the present affairs of nations are managed by Christ, for the good of the church; so the world of grace, and the affairs of his sanctuary, and his kingdoms on earth, are all ordained for the benefit of the saints. Christians, why did he separate you from the world, and call you out of the wilderness, and make you a chosen nation, and a peculiar people? Was it not for your advantage? Why did he write his word? Why did he ordain ministers and holy institutions? Was it not for your edification? Were not the seals of the covenant given to assist your faith, by the aid of your senses, and by this means to inflame your love, and exalt your joy? Are not the precepts of the word written to direct you in the way of duty? Are not the threatenings pronounced to awaken your fear, and guard you from sin and folly? And are not all the promises of the gospel given to comfort your souls, to support your spirits, and give a sweet taste of glory before-hand.

Whatsoever temporal circumstances attend you in this pre-

it life, whether they are painful or pleasant, they are all the ap-
intments of your heavenly Father for your real interest. Are
u at peace in the midst of plenty, and does every thing around
u smile upon you? It is that your hearts may be raised to
ankfulness, and your lips tuned to praise. Do you labour under
in or sickness? It is to wean you from flesh and blood, to put
u in mind, that this tabernacle is falling, to awaken your hearts
insure a better habitation on high. Do you want food or rai-
ent? It is to make you remember that you are in the wilder-
ss, and to call your meditations upward to your Father's house,
ere there is bread enough, and to spare. Are you scorned and
viled by the basest of men? Are you persecuted or imprisoned
d treated with rudeness or cruelty? It is to try and prove
ur suffering graces, that your faith, courage, and patience may
ine as gold that has passed through the furnace; are you called
seal the truth and testimony of Jesus with your blood? It
to prepare you for the crowns of glory that are laid up for
artyrs.

This thought leads me onward in the survey of this rich in-
ntory of a christian, and carries my thoughts into the invisible
gions, and into far distant futurities.

2. Not things present only in this visible world, but things
visible in other worlds are also yours, and were appointed for
our benefit. These are numbered by the apostle among the
ches and possessions of the saints. Is there a heaven built on
gh, with many palaces of light in it? They were built and fur-
shed for your reception. It is, "the inheritance of the saints
light;" *Col.* i. 12. Are there mansions of unknown glory,
ell prepared by our Lord Jesus Christ, since his ascent to hea-
en? He assures us in his last words, that they are prepared for
ou; *John* xiv. 2, 3. *In my Father's house are many mansions:
it were not so, I would have told you; I go to prepare a place
r you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come
ain and receive you to myself; that where I am, there ye may be
so.* Each of these mansions stands waiting for those saints, for
hom they are provided; and they are all adorned with rich mag-
ficent furniture, in the perfect beauty of holiness.

The angels, in their shining orders, are ordained to be your
tendants: Those holy inhabitants of the upper blessed world,
camp round about those that fear the Lord; Ps. xxxiv. 7. and
e appointed as guards to his children, by their heavenly Father.
*re they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them
ho shall be heirs of salvation*; Heb i. 14. They wait upon your
ying beds, and convey your souls to the bosom of Abraham;
ke xvi. 22. Happy souls, who have so illustrious a guard, so
pure a convoy to the far distant and unknown regions of light
id joy.

And the devils themselves
fiery temptations, have been but
good; they are as slaves to Chr
signed to purify your souls by th
which those evil spirits made us
Thus the ministers of divine wra
ments of your benefit. *When S*
as wheat, Christ has prayed for
Luke xxii. 31, 32. and he has ta
you might be purified, that nothin
chaff: that you might appear in t
Now if hell, and the wicked inhal
to serve your interest, and to
there is nothing in all the creatic
tage. O divine privilege, when
deserved curse of God, are thus
ness!

3. But not only present invis
things are yours too. The mo
pointed for your glory; and the
hands of the arch-angel, to awak
mortality. Jesus the Lord himse
call you from the grave: And *the*
the voice of the Son of God, and
day of judgment, and all the sole
your honour, to publish your vic
the face of the whole creation, to
and justified before men and ange
daughters of the Most High God

and things to come are all yours; and there is nothing in time or eternity, which can come within the reach or notice, but in some of these senses shall subserve your interest, and turn to your advantage. This is the genuine sense, and this the true limitation of these words, *all things are yours.*

The second thing proposed in this discourse, was to prove that notwithstanding the limited sense of these words, yet the true christian has a richer treasure in them, than all the worldly wealth of the sinner. And without multiplying particulars the proof of it will sufficiently appear in these four things:

I. The treasure of the meanest saint is vastly more large and extensive, than that of the richest sinner. Let the wicked man point to his heaps of money, and run over the names of his farms and manors, and call himself the lord and master of them all; it is but a narrow and poor survey, that a few pieces of shining earth can give us; or the fields that lie within the prospect of a mile or two, when compared with this vast and universal treasure, *all things are yours!* It is true, christians, that you have not the civil property and power over the earth, or the heavens; but you receive a divine advantage from all things, and that is more than the sinner can say concerning any one thing that he possesses in the way of civil property.

II. This treasure of the saints is more secure, and more durable than any thing that a sinner enjoys; therefore the apostle calls the wealth of this world, *uncertain riches, that cannot be trusted in*; 1 Tim. vi. 17. *Riches make to themselves wings, and fly away as an eagle towards heaven*; Prov. xxiii. 5. and leave the owner poor and destitute: Many a wealthy man who flourished yesterday, in abundance of ease and plenty, may be stripped of all to-morrow, and want the common supports of nature. What possessions soever are built upon the foundations of civil property, may be taken away from the saint or the sinner, by robbing and plunder, by cheating and knavery, by inundations of water, or the rage of fire, or by the invasion of a foreign enemy, but the beneficial interest that a christian has in all things is preserved to him by the covenant of grace. He may be stripped of all earthly possessions, but the loss of his temporal estate shall turn to his real benefit, as well as the possession of it. Losses and crosses, as well as plenty and peace, are numbered among the items of his inventory, and make up his treasure; so that though the outward scenes of things on earth are perpetually changing, his real and everlasting treasure is the same; for all things that appear in nature, that occur in present providence, or shall arise in future ages, shall work for his advantage: He may lose money or lands as well as a sinner; but that very loss shall turn to his gain.

This sort of treasure he cannot be dispossessed of by death itself for when he quits his visible interest in all things in this lower world, he enters into a new world of spirits, which he has never seen: and yet all things in that world are his too: All things in those unknown regions, where the departing spirit goes, are made over to the saint, by the same covenant as the things of this world; they shall all administer some divine profit to him, and be a part of his happiness in the world to come.

III. This treasure of a christian is ever growing, at least in the possession; for the occurrences of every day make some addition to it; whereas the wealth of sinners is impaired with using. The largest earthly estate may be wasted: Money decreases daily by procuring the supports of life; but a christian's treasure still improves. He lives upon it every day, and yet it grows still.

The providences of God here on earth, present us daily with some new affairs, new occurrences: Whether they be pleasant or painful, still the spiritual man finds his interest in them; and when he reviews his account in the evening, if his heart has been in a proper frame, he may write himself gainer. He has possessed and enjoyed the very crosses and sorrows of his former days: He has treasured up a store of divine experiences, in the midst of plenty and want, health and sickness: New scenes of life arise, new appearances of things; he is still like the bee, ready to suck honey from every flower that blows: He gathers his food and his riches from weeds that are unsavoury, as well as from the blossoms of perfume: If he is by this means adding daily to the number and strength of his graces and virtues, he is, as it were, treasuring up a good foundation for time to come, and, shall I be bold to say, adding beauties and ornaments to his robes of glory, and lustre to his heavenly crown.

IV. This large inheritance of a christian is all sanctified, which is more than can be said of any part of a sinner's estate. The riches of this world may be abused to luxury and debauchery, to iniquity and sore vexations. They may be abused to profaneness and impiety, to dishonour God, and corrupt the conversation of men, and to ruin their souls for ever: But this large and extensive treasure of a christian, is designed for his real happiness, as well as for the honour of his God; whatsoever he has to do with in the world, he uses it to the glory of his God, to the honour of his Saviour, to the benefit of his fellow-creatures, and to his own sublimest advantage. And concerning this sacred treasure, it may be said, that it is the property, or in the possession of a christian, no farther than it is sanctified to him, or than he receives it with a sanctified mind. *To the pure all things are pure;* Tit. i.

15. for *every thing is sanctified by the word of God and prayer*; 1 Tim. iv. 5. The exercise of piety among the saints puts a sort of consecration upon all creatures, so far as they use or enjoy them.

Thus it is made sufficiently evident, that the treasure of a saint vastly exceeds all the richest possessions of a sinner. I cannot enter now upon the third branch of my design, which was to shew, how a christian comes to be made heir and possesser of all things. Let us therefore shut up the present discourse with this one reflection:

Reflection.—" How unreasonable is it for a christian to forsake his profession, or his practice, for any thing which this world can tempt him with? For his treasures and enjoyments already are greater than any thing he can hope for in the ways of sin.

" What a powerful motive may be drawn hence, to persevere in faith and holiness? Christians, *all things are yours*; every thing you converse with shall turn to your benefit; *this world, and the other, things present and things to come, life and death are yours.*

" What valuable pretences can the world make, to tempt you to lose this inheritance, to quit these hopes, and to part with these possessions? Can you, by complying with any temptation, provide yourself with such riches as these; or with any thing that shall answer the loss of them? Sin and the world can promise you but a little, narrow share of good things: The gospel of Christ gives you a most extensive treasure, for it bestows all things upon you. The world can make nothing secure, but the treasures of christianity are everlasting; they reach beyond the grave, into unknown worlds and ages. All the wealth and pleasures, and enjoyments of this life perish with the using; but your inheritance is ever upon the increase:" As fast as time and providence bring forth days, and seasons, and new scenes, so fast this treasure grows; and you may receive the daily profit of it. What can sin and the world give you but what hath a secret curse in it? These your treasures are sanctified blessings, and the foretastes of them are designed to assist you onward in the ways of holiness and peace, till you arrive at the brightest and sweetest part of them, the full enjoyment of God and happiness in the upper world.

" Go on then, christians, with zeal and courage in the profession of your faith: Go on with constancy in the practice of duty: Feed daily upon that portion of your inheritance, which your heavenly Father appoints to sustain you in your travels homeward; and expect the rest in your Father's house. When the world would tempt you to forego your sacred interest in the

gospel, by the alluring offer of any temporal enjoyments, tell the world, that *life and death, things present and things to come, are yours* already: Let the world know that Christ has engaged and secured your heart for ever to himself, by outbidding all that the world can offer; for he has written down and sealed your title to a larger and richer inheritance, and annexed it to his own: *Ye are joint-heirs with Christ.* And he has appointed it to stand recorded in his holy book to the view of men and angels, that *all things are yours.*

The Recollection.—" And is it possible that so worthless a creature as I am, should be really entitled to all these blessings: Can it be true, that so rich an interest in the good things of time and eternity belongs to me? To me, who am less than the least of all the mercies of God? To me, who in the days of sin and ignorance, have abused all things, O my God, to thy dishonour? To me, who have provoked thy justice to strip me of all the common blessings of nature and life, and to make me for ever poor and miserable? Is the mercy of God so vast and overflowing, as not only to forgive these provocations, and to admit me into his favour, but to bless me also with so rich an inheritance? Fall down prostrate, O my soul, at the foot of sovereign and all-sufficient grace. Remember thy guilt, thy poverty, and thy wretchedness, and be ever humble before God thy infinite benefactor. Mourn over all thy unworthiness, and maintain a constant temper of penitent love, and self-abasing gratitude. I deserve to be cut off for ever, O Lord, from thy house, from thy family, and from all the blessings of thy children: But thou hast called me to the knowledge of thy Son Jesus, thou hast taught me to lay hold on the arm of thy salvation, thou hast made me willing in the day of thy power to renounce every sin, to subject myself to thy sceptre of righteousness, and to accept the grace of thy gospel. Thou hast opened the treasures of thy love, treasures that contain in them the good things of earth and heaven, things visible and invisible, things present and things to come: And while these treasures stood open to my view, in the voice of thy gospel thou hast told me, *All is yours.*

" O for an enlarged exercise of faith, to survey this inheritance! to rejoice in this extensive bounty of the Most High! to read the blessed language of this text, and to believe it with a humble claim and appropriation! Surely here is enough for faith to live upon, through all the remaining years of my pilgrimage, and my hope, till faith shall be turned into perfect sight, and hope into full and final enjoyment. I would not change my portion with the richest sinner on earth: My estate is larger, and my interests are more extensive. His gold and silver, his houses and lands can reach no farther than this world and time; but

my inheritance runs into eternity, and my enjoyment of it has no period.

"My treasures are secure against all the invasions and plunder of enemies, against all the rage of the winds, and waves, and fire; against all the confusions of the world, against all the overwhelming changes of time and nature; even against death itself, and the last conflagration. These lower heavens may be dissolved, the elements may melt with fervent heat, and the earth, and the works thereof, with all the fields, and the palaces, and the treasures of it, may be burned up, but my inheritance stands ever secure, for God himself, who is the original Creator and Possessor of all things, has secured life and happiness to me in his covenant: He has secured a possession of every thing that can be necessary to my happiness, or to my eternal life.

"O that I were taught to enjoy these blessings daily; and to observe the daily accessions that are made to my treasures, by all the new scenes of providence that are ever rising! May I be instructed to make a sanctified improvement of them all, and thus add something hourly to my best interest, to my everlasting hope! May life itself, with all the daily comforts and crosses of it, minister to me some sacred meditations, some holy and heavenly thoughts! May a divine consecration come down on all my affairs and concerns in this present state! and by a wise improvement of all those parcels of my inheritance, which my heavenly Father puts into my hands here on earth, may I be trained up and grow fitter daily for those brighter talents, those more glorious enjoyments, which he keeps in reserve for me when time shall be no more. *Amen.*

HYMN FOR SERMON XXXVII.

A Christian's Treasure:—All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, &c.

HOW vast the treasures we possess!
How rich thy bounty, King of grace!
This world is ours, and worlds to come:
Earth is our lodge, and heaven our home.

Paul is our teacher: while he speaks,
The shadows flee, the morning breaks;
His words like beams of knowledge shine,
And fill our souls with light divine.

Cephas is ours: he makes us feel
The kindlings of celestial zeal:
While sweet Apollos' charming voice
Gives us a taste of heav'nly joys.

The springing corn, the stately wood,
Grow to provide us house and food:
Fire, air, earth, water, join their force;
All nature serves us in her course.

The sun rolls round to make our day,
The moon directs our nightly way;
While angels bear us in their arms,
And shield us from ten thousand harms.

O glorious portion of the saints!
Let faith suppress our sore complaints,
And tune our hearts and tongues to sing
Our bounteous God, our sovereign King.

SERMON XXXVIII.

The Christian's Treasure.

1 Cor. iii. 21.——All things are yours.

THERE is nothing that a wise man can wish for in order to make him happy, but the gospel proposes it to encourage the faith and practice of christians. What honour is there to be enjoyed among the sons of men, that is wont to gratify our ambition, but the gospel assures us of higher honours than this, when it makes us the sons of God? What pleasures are there to be tasted in the satisfaction of animal nature, but the gospel invites us to more refined, and more lasting pleasures, which are to be derived from the love of God, and the company of our Saviour with all his saints? What riches can be possessed or desired by the most covetous mind, but the gospel proposes a far more extensive, a more durable, and more useful treasure, when it tells us in the words of my text, *all things are yours?*

The former discourse has made it appear in what sense these words are to be understood: Not that we have a present possession of all things, a power over them, or a civil right to seize and enjoy them; but the meaning is this, that so far as a christian can have any thing to do with the things of this world, or of another, things present or to come, they shall all be made to work together for his real good. It has been also proved in the second place, that this inheritance of the saints is incomparably richer, and more valuable than any thing which sinners can possess. I proceed now to the

Third general proposition, and that is, to enquire how christians come to be partakers of so fair and rich a treasure.

I. It is the kind and eternal purpose of God their Father, that it should be so. Christians, God has created all things in the world of nature with this design, that you should derive some benefit from them, as far as they can come within your reach or notice, your service or use: He appointed all things in the counsels of his providence, to bear some blessing for you. He has ordained all things in his kingdom of grace for your advantage: and there are unknown regions of light and glory which he has provided for you. His elect were ever nearest to his heart, next to the man Christ Jesus, next to his only begotten Son; *for they*

were all chosen in him before the foundation of the world; Eph. i. 4. Whether creation or providence, whether nature, grace or glory, *all things are for your sakes*; 2 Cor. iv. 15.

I would caution you again, that you are not to understand it in such an incredible sense, as though God made every particular creature in the upper and the lower worlds, only to give the possession of them to the saints, or that he manages all his providential kingdom, merely for the sake of his own people without any other view. No, this is stretching the words into an extent too large and unreasonable; for there are millions of creatures, millions of plants and animals in earth and sea, that are born, and grow, and live, and die again, which the saints of God never saw, nor know, nor shall know; nor can they receive any immediate benefit from them. But the meaning is this, that all things whatsoever the saints can or shall have to do with in this or other worlds, were intended to yield some profit to them, and especially while they maintain their character as the children of God, and walk as becomes their dignity and their profession. In all God's general counsels of creation, and providence, and grace, he kept his eye, as I may say, still upon his saints: He designed their good in ten thousand instances, in his great and glorious works, and resolved that nothing in all his kingdoms should interfere with their last and best interest.

Though what he has written down in the book of his decrees, is read only at large by his Son Christ Jesus, yet he has written out a sweet abstract of it in the book of his promises, that the saints on earth might read and know it; Rom. viii. 28. *And we know that all things work together for good, to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.* It was for their sakes the promises were written, that they might have not only a present relish of divine blessings, but a sweet foretaste of joys long to come. The blessings of the children of God were numbered up, and written down originally for them, in the book of God's everlasting counsels; and in the book of his word has he copied out for them, the blessings of heaven from above, and of the deep from beneath; the precious things brought forth by the sun, and under the influence of the moon; the chief things of the ancient mountains on earth, so far as is needful for them here, and the precious things of the everlasting hills of paradise hereafter.

Does the great Creator and Lord of all keep the wheels of nature in their settled courses? It is for his people's good. *The stars in their courses shall fight for Israel:* Or does he countermand nature in any of its motions, and bid the *sun stand still in Gibeon, and the moon in the valley of Ajalon?* It is that the armies of his people may have long day-light, to subdue their

enemies. Hail-stones and thunder shall break out of the clouds to destroy the Canaanites, when Israel is at war with them; But if Israel want bread in the wilderness, the clouds shall drop down manna, and give them bread from heaven. The Lord gave up Egypt with her armies to the waves of the Red-sea, for the ransom and redemption of his people: He gave Ethiopia and Seba to the sword for the safety of his servant Jacob; Is. xliii. 7. *I have loved thee, O Israel, therefore I gave men for thee, and people for thy life.* And it is no wonder that God has given all things to his children, since he has given himself to them, and told them, *I am your God:* It is no wonder he has bestowed all things upon them, since he has bestowed his Son upon them: His own, his only Son, who is dearer to him than all the creation; Rom. viii. 32. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

II. The saints have an interest in all things, for Christ is made Lord over all things for his people's good; Eph. i. 22. "God hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to his church." Thus the names of the saints are, as it were, inserted into that divine patent that exalts and constitutes Christ Lord of all.

And indeed, Christ has not only a right to all things by the mere donation of the Father, but it may be said, he has purchased all things for his own honour, and his people's good. "Because he was obedient unto death, therefore God has so highly exalted him;" Phil. ii. 8. "and made him Lord of the dead and the living;" Rom. xiv. 9. And perhaps it is in this sense, that the inheritance of the saints may be called "the purchased possession;" Eph. i. 14. Now, christians, since all the affairs of nature, grace, and glory, are put into the hands of such a friend in trust for you, that they may be managed and employed for your advantage, it is as well, nay, it is much better than if all things were at present in your possession, that is, under your present state of weakness and folly; for his wisdom and goodness shall govern all for your truest interest. Ye are Christ's, so the apostle expresses it in the verse next to my text: And Christ, who has all in his hands, will take care of you who are his own.

"Christ is made heir of all things;" Heb. i. 2. And if ye belong to Christ, *then are ye heirs of God, and joint heirs of Christ*; Rom. viii. 17. And the express promise of the Father confirms it, that all things are yours; Rev. xxi. 7. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son;" 1 Cor. xii. 27. "Ye are the members of the

body, and Christ is the head." Now the members must in their measure become sharers of what the head possesses. In your proportion, O christians, you shall have communion with Christ your Lord, in his royalties and his wide dominion: for he hath promised that "ye shall sit down on his throne, when ye have overcome your enemies, even as he overcame, and is set down on the throne with his Father;" Rev. iii. 21. Ye are one with Christ, and therefore in your measure, O believers, and according to your capacity, ye shall possess and enjoy all things which he possesses, so far as is requisite for your benefit in this world, and your truest happiness for ever.

III. The saints are actually invested with this privilege, by believing on the Son of God, by accepting the covenant of his grace, by receiving Christ Jesus the Saviour, according to the appointed methods of the gospel. When a poor, destitute, guilty, and perishing creature is made willing by divine grace, to give up himself to Christ as his Saviour and his Lord, he is divested of his guilt, he is clothed with the robes of salvation, he is translated out of a state of sin, poverty, and wretchedness, into a state of rich grace, and becomes a child of God, and an heir of all things. A living faith, which has all the springs of holiness in it, is ordained to carry in it all the springs of treasure and felicity. This unites the soul to Christ, this gives a humble claim to all the blessings laid up in the eternal decrees and purposes of God; blessings purchased by the blood of his Son Jesus; blessings promised in the word of the gospel, wherein all things are given for a possession to the children of the Most High.

IV. All things may be said to belong to the saints, or shall turn to their advantage, because the blessed Spirit is given them, to teach them to improve all things for their own benefit; 1 Cor. ii. 12. *We have received—the Spirit, which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God:* And that not only that christians might know what their treasures are, but learn how to make a right use of them too. They are taught by the Holy Spirit, to receive the common blessings of nature from the hands of God, as a Father and a Friend, and a God in covenant: And they rejoice in them as such, with humble thankfulness; they are instructed to derive useful meditations from the sun, moon, and stars; and to read the wisdom, the power, and the glory of their Creator, and their Father there, and to rejoice in his goodness. The peaceful state of kingdoms, or battles, wars and earthquakes, and the convulsion of nations, are all made useful lessons to a child of God; and he gains something from all of them, by the teachings of the blessed Spirit.

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Last place, to consider what use may be made of this discourse.

First Use.—It affords a word of mourning and terror to obstinate and impenitent sinners. Are all things made beneficial to the saints? Think with yourselves then what you lose, because you are not of that number. If you live and die in this sinful state, you have a comfortable interest in nothing: Nothing works for your real benefit. Your abuse of all things that you have any thing to do with, takes away the true pleasure and enjoyment of what you possess, and turns them into a curse to you instead of a blessing. *Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or this world, or life or death, or things present, or things to come,* nothing is yours: *for ye are not Christ's.* And ye shall reap no final and lasting advantage from any thing, if you persist in a sinful and impenitent state; for ye are without God in the world, with Christ, and without hope.

Do you sit under the ministry of Paul, who spreads the glorious light of the gospel around you? But the God of this world hath blinded your minds, that this divine light should not reach them: Even the preaching of Paul is a savour of death unto you, if you live and die without the faith and love of Christ. Do you hear the zealous and pathetic language of Apollos? But your heart perhaps grows the harder under it: You resist the affectionate entreaties of the gospel, from the lips of that eloquent preacher. And even Apollos, whose soul is wont to melt with compassion for perishing sinners, shall rise up in judgment against you. And as for the plain and condescending ministry of Cephas, you despise the man and his sermons together; therefore you can get no benefit by them. Neither Paul, nor Apollos, nor Cephas is yours.

Well, if spiritual things are not yours, you hope, however, that you have a property in things temporal: If the blessings of the church do not belong to you, yet you claim a good share in this world, and the blessings of it: You feed deliciously, you are dressed in gay colours and gold, and you have wealth laid up in store for many years to come. Poor vain creatures! What is all your treasure? What is your property in it? A sorry property in lands, and a large estate, when not a clod of the earth, nor a penny of the money shall turn to your real and lasting benefit! I grant that you possess some of the good things of this world indeed. But your riches and plenty are not real and proper blessings, while you are afar from Christ, and strangers to him: Your own unbelief and impenitence, and rebellion against God, turn all the comforts of the world into curses: It is only the grace of Christ can take off the curse, and sanctify this world into a blessing.

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And can you be content with such a portion as this is, while the saints are inheritors of all that is holy and happy, both in this world and the next? O may your busy thoughts be awakened betimes, and make you ever restless and uneasy in your present wretched estate! Return to the Lord in humble mourning for all your past iniquities: Return to God speedily, from whom you have wickedly departed: Loath yourselves because of your abominations, and abandon every idol: *Say to him, my Father, in the spirit of faith and penitence, and he will put you among the children, and give you a goodly heritage;* Jer. iii.19.

Seek acquaintance with Jesus the Son of God, the Saviour, the Lord and Heir of all things; commit your souls to his hands, resign yourselves entirely to his grace, that he may change your unholy natures by his Spirit, that he may cleanse away your guilt by the blood of his atonement, that he may give you an interest in his own riches; then the covenant of his love shall sanctify to you all the enjoyments of earth and time, and make you possessors of all the good things in heaven and eternity.

Second Use.—This doctrine discovers to us the glory of the new covenant. A blessed covenant indeed that has given so rich a treasure to creatures so unworthy! We are sinners; and deserve nothing, yet when we believe in the Son of God, the gospel gives us in our measure the inheritance and possession of all things.

Adam was made Lord of this lower world; this earth and the creatures that dwell on it were put into his hands, all things below were given him for his use, his support, and his delight. Thus mankind considered in the first Adam, in his innocent estate, were lords of all. But *by one man sin entered into the world;* Rom. v. 12. and by that sin, Adam has forfeited his sovereignty and dominion, with all his large possession of the creatures, both for himself and for us. When the sentence came forth from the mouth of God, *Cursed be the ground for thy sake;* Gen. iii. 17. the curse fell on all this lower world, and did, as it were, make a seizure of the creatures out of the hands of Adam the great sinner. They are no more his in that sanctified manner for his real and final benefit, as they were before: They now become instruments of temptation and sin, pain, and sorrow and misery. But the covenant of grace restores all back again to us in and by the second Adam, who is the Lord of the new world, and under this character, is possessor of all things: And a sanctified use of all things is given to us again, in and by Christ Jesus. O glorious covenant, that can take away the curse from creatures, and make them become a blessing to the saints!

But there is a further glory in it still; for our possession of

all things in the second Adam, is far more secure than it was in the first. This rich and extensive treasure is put into the hands of Christ our Mediator, our Head, and our Surety for us, that we may not abuse our possession by sin to our own ruin; and that we may not forfeit our inheritance the second time, and so lose it for ever.

Third Use.—This doctrine yields sweet consolation to a poor afflicted saint, who is taught to make a right improvement of it. The gospel should teach a christian in these circumstances, such divine language as this: "Am I poor and despised by the great and rich in this world? yet I trust I am made a child of God by his renewing grace, and the promise gives me a right to all things. God my Father has engaged that all things shall work together for my good. He has made me a joint-heir with his best-beloved Son Jesus, and has given me a fair and large inheritance. I shall be possessor of every comfort among the creatures that is necessary to my supreme interest, and my final happiness, and God himself is my eternal portion.

"What if I cannot read my name and my title to lands and houses, to green fields and palaces, in large conveyances and writings under the seal of men? but I can read my name as a christian in the covenant of grace, under the seal of God, and the blood of his Son, and there I find that all things are mine. While I survey the gardens of a rich sinner, every herb and flower there gives me more sweetness than he can find in them all: For I can converse with God my Maker, and my Father, in every herb, and every flower. While I walk amongst the trees of my neighbour's fields, they yield me their refreshing shade, and compose my thoughts to divine meditation. I can lift up my eyes to the stately building where my neighbour dwells, and raise my thoughts thence to the mansions of glory: Then I rejoice to think how much my inheritance and my mansion there exceeds the most magnificent structure on earth. Thus his fields, and his gardens, and his stately dwelling, afford a divine light to me, which perhaps the earthly possessor of them knows nothing of: And though I have almost nothing that I can call my own on earth, yet, in this sense, *I possess all things.* My God hath given me so much of the good things of this world, as he saw needful and proper for my real interest: and surely if I might have had all things within my immediate reach, and under my sovereignty, I would not lay hold of more of them (if I were truly wise) than would promote my welfare.

"Do I sit at the footstool of the rich in the house of God; or am I but a door-keeper in the sanctuary, yet I can there hear Paul declare the sublime mysteries of the gospel, and while he reveals the wonders of God's eternal love, my heart within me

believes, and adores, and rejoices. Apollos entertains me with most affectionate discourses of the grace of Christ and his glory: my faith rises high, my love is kindled to him whom my eyes have not seen; I believe in him, I love him, and my joy grows almost unspeakable. I remember the former instructions of Cephas, who taught me the first principles of this divine religion; and I take pleasure in those sacred foundations. Blessed be God, they are unshaken, and my faith and hope, which were begun under his ministry, stand for ever firm. Paul, and Apollos, and Cephas are mine.

"It has pleased my heavenly Father indeed, to lay many sorrows upon me in this wilderness; but I have learned to think and speak like a christian, and say, Though I appear *as dying, yet behold I live;* though I am *chastised*, yet I am *not killed*: Every stroke of his rod is given by the hand of his love. His rod, like the rod of Aaron, blossoms with divine blessings, and brings forth holy fruit. These wounds that I feel let out the blood of pride, and cure the distempers of my soul. Thus the very sufferings of nature, and the sorrows of life are mine; I have learned to reckon my afflictions among my blessings; they work for my profit. Whether peace or pain, are all mine. Besides, I solace myself in the midst of my poverty and distress with this sweet meditation, that the less I enjoy of temporal comforts, and the delights of this world, if I improve my sufferings and sorrows well, there is the more joy and glory laid up for me in the world to come. *My light afflictions which are but for a moment, are working for me a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;* 2 Cor. iv. 17. Is my life on earth stretched out to a tiresome age? Heaven will be much the sweeter, and after many toils, I shall have the stronger relish of an eternal rest. Or does death make haste toward me in younger years, and bring my body quickly down to the dust? My soul then is but dismissed the sooner to the building on high that is prepared for me; for whether life or death, all are mine.

When I cast my eyes around, and survey the present frame of things, the sun in his daily circuit, and the moon and stars in their nightly courses, my faith assures me they are all employed in rolling the months and hours away, that stand between me and immortal happiness: And when the morning of the resurrection dawns upon the earth, the gospel tells me, that I have a share in all the rising glories of that day. Should the heavens and the earth be shortly set on fire, if I have but my faith awake within me, I shall have no fear nor surprize; I myself, and all my best interests are out of the reach of these flames; my treasures are of an unperishing kind. The period of all things here below shall but usher in my brightest hours, and begin the years of my eter-

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Saviour knows that sickness is better for thee at this season than health. Do not murmur at his hand, for God the Father has intrusted him to manage and govern all his own vast dominions; and canst not thou entrust him to manage thy estate, to dispose of thy concerns, and to allot thy daily portion to thee?

The saint surrounded with distress and poverty, or naked, and hungry will say, "Is not food and raiment, and peace specified in the articles of the covenant, and numbered among my treasures? Yes, but poverty, and hunger, and cold, and nakedness are there also: And thy heavenly Father sees it best to withhold peace and plenty from thee at present, or to give thee thy food and raiment but in a scanty measure, to mortify thy flesh, to humble thy pride, to wean thee from the creatures, to teach thee immediate dependance on himself, and to fit thee for a departure to the heavenly world.

When thou art deprived therefore of one earthly comfort after another, and the remaining good things of this life seem to be leaving thee, have a care of murmuring against thy God. Dare not take up the words of Jacob and say, "Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and will ye take Benjamin also? Surely all these things are against me;" Gen. xlii. 36. But Jacob was made to know, by sweet experience, that all these things wrought for his real advantage, and were made the means of preserving himself and his family too in a day of spreading famine and desolation.

Sixth Use.—This doctrine forbids all contention and envy at our fellow-creatures, as well as repining against God.

Is my brother healthy and strong, while I am sick and feeble and languishing? Does my brother possess more of the good things of this life than I do? It is because our common Father sees it proper to keep me shorter, and to withhold so full an allowance from me. I have an interest in the same large inheritance: I am a child of the same family; and therefore all things are mine as well as his: But I have committed it entirely to the wisdom and goodness of our heavenly Father, to put into my hands what part he pleases of my large inheritance. He is wisest, and will distribute the several portions that he sees fittest for his children, and for this reason I cannot envy my brother. It is the same kind and faithful hand that weighs and measures out my grains and scruples, and little handfuls of earthly blessings, that gives my brother his loads and his full barns.

Has the ministry of Paul been blessed to me, and not that of Apollos? Have the labours of Apollos been more blessed to

my fellow-christian, or the plain and familiar instructions of Cephas? Well, I will never make any parties in the church upon this account: for all the ministers of the gospel are appointed for our edification; and I will rejoice in them all, and bless God for the service they do the family of Christ. If my portion of spiritual food be distributed to me by the hands of Paul, it is our common Father that conveys the same sacred food to another, by the hands of Cephas or Apollos; and the world shall never hear me say, "I am of Paul, in opposition to Apollos or Peter; though I must confess, God has blessed his ministrations most eminently to my soul."

Seventh Use.—Has God given all things to the saints by the covenant of grace, surely then they should return all things back again to him, in a way of gratitude, duty and service. Has he promised to make every thing which we have to do with, concur to promote our best interest, and our final happiness? Let us then apply ourselves with zeal and diligence, to make every thing within our reach subserve his divine interests, and the glory of his kingdom.

Has my gracious God withheld nothing from me, but together with his own Son given me all things, why then should I withhold any thing from him? Why should I not devote my heart, my head, my hands, my whole self, and all things that are within my power, to the honour of his name? Does God bestow life or health or riches upon such a worthless creature as I am? Let holiness to the Lord be written upon them all. And if my fellow-creatures are poor, needy, cold, and starving, let me chearfully minister to them of my substance, which the great Lord of heaven and earth has so richly betowed on me. My God honours me indeed, when he makes me the dispenser of his blessings among his creatures, and especially among his saints. I lose nothing by this benevolence, but am rather enriched by this very distribution. I become rich in good works, and rich in divine promises: "He that gives to the poor lendeth to the Lord, and he will repay him." Alms are as money laid out to the best interest, and are a growing treasure.

But should I hope for no new beneficial return of all my kindness to men, the very benefits received of God my Father constrain me to this bounty. Has he given all things to a poor worthless creature, and shall I give nothing to the poor, or the unworthy? Shall I not rather imitate the profuse bounty of my God, who commands *his sun to shine, and his rain to descend both on the evil and the good.* It is a divine excellence to love and to distribute as God does.

The name of Jesus my Saviour has yet a further power to oblige me to use all my earthly possessions for his honour. Has

Christ Jesus purchased this large and fair inheritance for me with his blood, has he given me much on earth, and the hopes of greater treasures in heaven, then I will be my own no longer, but give my whole self up to him, with all my powers and talents, and possessions! They are thine, blessed Saviour, they are thine for ever. It is the solemn and deliberate wish of my heart, that I may never possess or enjoy any thing from which Christ has no revenue of glory. O that his grace may enable me to employ things present for this holy purpose! And when I arrive at the actual possession of things to come, they shall be improved in an unknown but a nobler manner, for the everlasting glory of my God, my Father, and my Saviour.

The Recollection of the doctrinal part.—" In this discourse, O my soul, thou hast not only been called to survey the riches of thy inheritance, but thou hast learned also, in what manner this inheritance is made over to thee, if thou art a sincere christian, and a believer on the Son of God.

" Look backward, my soul, to eternal ages, before the world began, when God marked out the bounds of this creation, and the limits of these heavens, and this earth, he designed them with all their treasures, for the service of his holy ones, for the benefit of his children, angels and men; and thy name and thy share was written down amongst them. The great God, in those early days of his eternity, has provided a rich sufficiency for thy present and future blessedness. O may my faith take this delightful and distant retrospect, and rejoice in God's eternal's love?

" God has given all things into the hands of his own Son Jesus, whom he hath ordained Lord of all, that he might govern and dispose of all things for the good of his people. Christ is risen from the dead, and hath taken possession of all the blessings of grace and glory, in the name of his saints, that he may make them possessors in their season, and according to their measure: That he may make thee, O my soul, a rich possessor of so fair an inheritance; and that he may keep every part of it secure for thee, till in succession of times and seasons, both in earth and in heaven, thou art fit to receive and enjoy it. If thou art made a joint-heir with Christ, thou art heir of all things.

But remember, it is a living faith in Christ that must entitle thee to this rich inheritance. It is of infinite importance then, to search often and enquire, Am I a christian indeed? A sincere convert, a believer in Jesus? And does my faith evidence itself in all the fruits of repentance, love, and holiness? O may I feel my soul to live daily this divine life by the faith of the Son of

God, as the God of nature, and
ders of his grace! May I learn
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of the saints in light!" Amen.

HYMN FOR SE

All things working t

MY soul survey thy happiness,
If thou art found a child of grace,
How richly is the gospel ster'd!
What joy the promises afford!

"All things are ours;" the gift of God,
And purchas'd with our Saviour's blood,
While the good Spirit shews us how
To use and to enjoy them too.

If peace and plenty crown my days,
They help me, Lord, to speak thy praise:

SERMON XXXIX.

The right Improvement of Life.

1 Cor. iii. 22.—Whether life or death,—all are yours.

IT is a large and fair inheritance that belongs to the children of God. They have no need to divide themselves into little parties, and to quarrel about their particular interest in one minister or another, in one blessing or another; for whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, whether life or death, all things are theirs.

My former discourses have explained in what sense christians possess all things, and that is, that all things present or to come, that can any way affect or concern them, shall certainly turn to their benefit, and subserve their great and final interest. I proceed now more particularly to enlarge on the words, which I had chiefly in my design, *whether life or death, all are yours.* The first doctrine arising from the words is this, "Life itself, and the continuance of it to the saints, is for their advantage." Now to improve this proposition to practical purposes, I shall do these things:

I. I shall make it appear under a variety of instances, that life is designed for the benefit of christians.—II. I would amplify and confirm the doctrine yet further, by discovering what a variety of graces may be exercised on earth, which can have no place in heaven; and make it appear, that in some respects, a saint below hath advantage above the saints that are on high. —III. I shall answer a considerable objection or two that seems to rise against the doctrine, while I am treating of it: And, at last some inferences will be drawn from the whole discourse.

First let me shew wherein life appears to be a benefit to true believers. *Life is yours,* O christians, for

1. This is is the time that was given you for your reconciliation to God, and securing your everlasting interest. All the elect of God are born into this world sinful and miserable, by their relation to the first Adam, therefore St. Paul seems to include himself, as well as the heathen infidels, when he speaks of the iniquity of their nature, and the guilt of their state. Eph.

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But O what infinite advanta

quainted with Jesus that bought and bestows forgiveness; before ye had known the virtue of his reconciling blood, or seen the face of a God reconciled? While your hearts and life were all unclean and unholy, your death must have been dreadful, and your soul for ever unhappy. What infinite honours are due to the patience and long-suffering of your God, and to the mercy and mediation of Jesus your Saviour? Glory be to divine patience, and divine grace, for life prolonged, and a sinner saved!

II. Life is yours; it is your opportunity of doing much service for Christ, and manifesting your gratitude for his redeeming love; 2 Cor. v. 15. *They who live, should not henceforth live to themselves, but to him that died for them, and rose again.*

Here on earth, you may speak of the wonders of his grace that has saved you, and publish his love that is unspeakable: You may tell sinners of the infinite dimensions of this love, to invite them to partake of the same salvation. Here your lips, and your tongues may be delightfully employed, in declaring what you have tasted of the blessings of the gospel, and the grace of Christ; and call others to *taste and see that the Lord is good, and how blessed the man is that trusteth in him!* Ps xxxiv. 8. Here you make it known, for the support of poor convinced wretches that are ready to despair, what heights and what lengths, what breadths and what depths there are in the love of Christ; for it reached your soul even at the borders of hell, it spread wide to cover all your great and heinous iniquities; it rises high, for it has lifted your hopes to heaven, and it stretches its sweet and sovereign influence beyond the length of time, and provides for your life and happiness that shall measure out eternity. Here you may proclaim the praises of your Redeemer to an ignorant world, you may promote his interest a hundred ways on earth, and thus glorify your Saviour which is in heaven.

This is not to be done in the same manner, nor for the same blessed purposes amongst the saints above. When the body lies senseless and mouldering in the grave, the tongue cannot praise the Lord: *The living, the living, they praise thee as we do this day*, as Hezekiah did when he was recovered from sickness, and had a sense of pardoned sin. Is. xxxviii. 17, 18. *In love to my soul, thou hast delivered it from the pit of corruption, for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back. The grave cannot praise thee, the dead cannot celebrate thee; they that go down to the pit cannot hope for thy truth.* This is the proper work of the living saint, to make known to sinners the grace of salvation.

Life is the only time of such work and service. "Opportunity, (saith a writer on this subject) is like a golden instrument to dig for heavenly treasure: Do not wear it out as many have done in digging for pebbles, and at your latter end become a fool. Plead not your mean capacity: *Kings of the earth, and all people, old men and children may praise the Lord*; Ps. cxlviii. 11, 12. Serve your age according to your talent; Mat. xxv. 15. He that had but one talent, but a single capacity, was called to account for it, and cast into outer darkness. Think how many opportunities you have out-lived, which will never have their resurrection: Redeem lost time, by improving what remains. Project improvements of life, since your light is near extinguished. Make up in affection what may be wanting in action. If you cannot do much, yet love much. If our servants should work no better for us than many have done for God, we should turn them out of doors. Stir up others to work for God, that you may do by their hand what you cannot do by your own." Thus this pious author.

Let us consider what glorious services have been done for God, by the long continuance of saints in this world. Survey the labours and the sufferings, the ministry, the zeal and the success of the blessed apostles, who planted the first christian churches. What monuments of honour did they raise among Jews and strangers, among Greeks and barbarians, the savage and the polite heathens, to their crucified and exalted Saviour! What multitudes of subjects were brought to bow the knee to Jesus by their preaching! What a large harvest of souls was gathered unto Christ, when the apostle scattered the seed of the gospel all round the countries, from Jerusalem, through the provinces of the lesser Asia, and through the southern parts of Europe, as some have supposed, as far as Spain! And the Redeemer was glorified by his labours where the name of the true God the Creator was hardly known before. What an extensive blessing to the world was the life of Paul? It is to this, that the following ages of christianity, as well as the primitive saints, owe the unspeakable benefit of his writings; and it is to this, that Great Britain owes the blessing of his divine epistles. How honourable was it for St. Paul himself, and how happy for us, that he was made an instrument of such service to Christ, such a glorious service, as spread itself around the nations, and reached to distant ages of mankind. His long life was an illustrious blessing both to himself and to the christian world.

III. Life is yours, O christians, for it allows many a proper season for giving examples of holiness to mankind. And it is a honour to a saint, to be made an example of religion amongst a nation of sinners, or a pattern of holiness, among the churches of

believers. Herein you become followers and imitators of the blessed Lord your Master: He is the first pattern, he is the most glorious example; for in all things he must have the pre-eminence.

If you become a public and a shining example of virtue, and piety, and goodness, you may attain these four very valuable ends at once:

1. By this means you pay great and just honours to the blessed gospel whereby you are saved, and confound and silence the impious accusations and slanders of the wicked: And especially if your station and rank in the world make you the object of more public notice, either in a city, in a village, in a neighbourhood, or in any society of men, then like a candle or a torch set on a hill, you diffuse light and honour far around you, and God and the gospel are glorified on your account. And not only in the higher stations of life, but even servants of the lowest character, if they are but saints, *may adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things*; Titus ii. 10. It is greatly for the credit of our holy religion, when the men of this world seeing our good works, are forced to confess that there is something divine in christianity, that God is amongst us of a truth; and by these means they are constrained to glorify our Father, and our Redeemer, and our holy religion. This is the command of Christ; Mat. v. 16.

2. Hereby sinners are not only convinced that there is a power and glory in the doctrine of Christ, but many a soul has been converted to the faith of Jesus, by beholding the pious conversation, the heavenly graces, the holy love, the divine zeal, the constancy, the patience, and the sufferings of christians. The good women in St. Peter's days were exhorted to invite and draw their unbelieving husbands to the faith and love of the gospel, "by beholding their chaste conversation, coupled with religious fear, and the ornament of a meak and a quiet spirit; 1 Pet. iii. 1—4. Look forward, O christians, to the last great day, and think with what a pleasing joy you shall hear those who have been converted by your example, and reformed from a licentious course of life, declare this to your public honour before men and angels: Your holy example though buried long in silence, shall have a glorious resurrection in that day, and the Judge himself shall proclaim it to your praise, that he used your piety here on earth, as an instrument of his grace to enlarge his kingdom.

3. Hereby christians of a lower form, and those that are babes in Christ, are awakened to a holy imitation of your superior virtues and graces. It was the continuance of St. Paul in

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the perfume itself is removed. Th
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place where he lived, while his l
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this world.

IV. Life is yours; for it gives
good works to the great benefit of m
lives, if he maintains his character
much a greater blessing to the world
ceases with the life of a good man!

Christians, ye are required to n
honour of your Father, and for the
hath purchased you to be a peculi

multitude of good works, as much as by the revolutions of the sun and moon: For lost and wasted time should not come into the account of life. But if this were our way of counting, what should we say of thousands, who have lived to no other purpose but to eat and drink, and to make up the number of mankind? O it is a mean and pitiful thing only to be old in time, and not in duties to God, or benefits to men. And, as an author speaks on this subject, "All the good works of many who are stricken in years will lie in a very little compass: To be an ancient man or woman of two or three years old, sounds like a contradiction, and it is, indeed, a matter of great shame, and ought to awaken deep repentance.

How many are there that live to no purpose at all, and the world will not miss them when they are gone? How many that live to wicked purpose, and the world is glad to be rid of them? Some are mere cumberers of the ground, and some are perfect nuisances, and public mischiefs. Such should never pretend to the name of christians. Let us remember it was the character of our blessed Lord, that *he went about doing good; and he was willing to work those works while it was his day of life; for the night was coming on him wherein he should have no such sort of work to do*; John ix. 4. O may our Saviour be our pattern, and let us be followers of the holy Jesus! Alas! what a noble pattern! what slow and distant followers.

It was this desire of service to the world, that put the great apostle into a strait betwixt two, as in Philip. i. 23. He knew not what to ask for; *Shall I pray for death and glory, my heart hath a wish that way? It is far better for me to depart, and to be with Christ: Or shall I desire to continue in life? This is for the service of your faith, and furtherance of your joy; therefore I am content, saith he, to have my crown and glory deferred, that my longer life may be your advantage. O what an illustrious spirit of zeal and love reigned in the heart of this apostle!*"

Ye are the light of the world, saith Christ to his disciples; Mat. v. 13, 14. What a dark dungeon would this world be, if it had never a saint in it? *Ye are the salt of the earth*; What corruption of manners would overspread the face of the earth! What vile communications, and odious practices would defile the world in a few years, if every christian were dead! What shameful and abominable works had over-run the heathen nations, before Christ and his gospel appeared, and the idolaters were made christians! A saint in a family, is like *the ark of God in the house* of Obed-edom; 2 Sam. vi. 12. *For the Lord blessed the house of Obed-edom, and all that pertained to him, because of the ark of God.* A pious soul is a Joseph in the family of Potiphar; Gen. xxxix. 5. *When the Lord blessed the Egyp-*

...er, and a field of blood for
ing wickedness in the midst of i
righteous that have always stood
always some powerful pleaders at t
of God and the destroying angel
flood upon us, some Moses and S
tion, when popery and tyranny ha
ready to overwhelm us.

O how many unknown blessin
joy, because of the lives and the pr
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the persons of every party who a
earth; these are the guards and wa
the chariots of our Israel, and the h
12. xiii. 14.

V. Life is yours; for it affords
evidence for heaven, and improving
glory. Surely you are not willing t
you have good hope of an interest
fortable expectation that it shall be v
God prolong your days on earth? S
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your graces grow up under the infl

1 John iii. 3. and his increasing purity will confirm his hope. Believe it christians, as your life and practice grows more divine and undefiled, the image of Christ will appear in you with fairer evidence, and raise your hopes of dwelling with him to the joys of assurance. Many a soul has gone to heaven as in a chariot of triumph, after some years of their practice of christianity, who, at their first profession of it, were oppressed with many doubts and fears, and were often trembling upon the borders of despair. Life was their blessing indeed, when it taught them to die with faith and honour, and enter into the world of spirits with divine joy.

Let it be said then concerning you, O christians, that you sensibly approach nearer to heaven every month of your continuance upon earth, and that you look more like the inhabitants of that upper world, by how much the longer you continue in this lower state; that when you depart hence, you may be assured of a joyful admission into paradise. May your graces shine bright, and your evidences for heaven appear so glorious and incontested, that there may be no tremblings about your heart in that solemn and important hour; no doubtful flutterings or frights on a death-bed, but that you may find the gates of glory open before you, that you may see your way clear through the dark valley, and have a rich and abundant entrance into the kingdom of your God on high.

VI. Life is yours, that by a due improvement of it your crown of glory may be enlarged, and your seat advanced in heaven.

That there are different degrees of honour and joy conferred on the saints above, according to their different characters and capacities, is a doctrine that hath so much countenance and evidence from scripture, that we can no longer justly doubt of it: And, I think, I have made this appear by incontested proofs in another place*. If you are zealous for the cause of Christ, and active in his service through all the stages of life, and your old age be crowned with abundant fruits of righteousness, your reward in glory shall bear a proportion to these labours, and the length of your time on earth shall give a glorious addition to your recompence in the heavenly world; 1 Cor. xv. 58. *Be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; for as much as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.* What a shame and pity is it that you or I should have a long life on earth, and but a low rank or a little portion of reward in heaven!

But to animate your zeal, I would humbly propose yet a more surprizing advancement in glory, to the diligent improvers

* Treatise on Death and Heaven, discourse II. sect. 2.

of life and grace. What if the services you do for God on earth should still bring forth new fruit among men long after your death? and if your happiness should be ever increasing in this proportion? When the great Judge comes, he will surely *reward every one according to their works.* But in Jer. xvii. 10. it is said, *God will not only give to every man according to his ways, but also according to the fruit of his doings?* What if our labours, our prayers, our pious works and words, or our examples on earth should go on to produce this divine fruit, even the conversion of souls when we are in heaven? And what if the rich and overflowing grace of God should reward us on this account with growing glories? And *those who turn many to righteousness in this manner, should shine as stars with increasing lustre?*

Some divines have supposed, that the mischievous influence of the works and lives of the wicked shall increase their torment: And perhaps, Jeroboam, who set up the calves at Dan and Bethel, and who made the land of Israel to practise idolatry for some hundreds of years after his own death, might feel yearly more intense agonies of conscience, and his hell grow seven times hotter. This is a dreadful thought, and should terribly awaken and impress those sinners who have diffused their iniquities far and wide, who have corrupted whole families, and cities, and nations, and spread their poison through succeeding ages. And why may not the joy and crown of St. Paul increase and brighten by the conversion of sinners, through sixteen hundred years, by the influence of his holy writings amongst all the christian nations? And thus not the Thessalonians alone, but the inhabitants of Great Britain, shall be the matter of his glory and joy! O it is a blessed thing to multiply good instructions, and counsels, and exemplary practices of holiness; and to hear of them after we have gone to heaven, either by ministering angels, or by souls newly arriving there, that they still yield on earth a further crop and harvest of honour to Christ, and profit to men. Such tidings as these cannot but raise and advance our own joys.

As your zeal and labour in active service shall find a retribution every way answerable, so your patience under sufferings shall meet with a proportionable reward; 2 Cor. iv. 17. *For our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, are working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.* Life is the only season, as I shall shew afterwards, for this sort of exercise; and the longer we endure sorrows here honourably, the richer shall our reward be hereafter, though the reward is not of merit but of free grace.

How many saints are there in heaven exalted to eminent stations in that upper world, and some who wear, perhaps, the

crown of martyrdom, and enjoy the prizes of victory over a thousand temptations, after they have run a long race in christianity? And yet many of these, it may be, would have possessed but a low station, and a little share of honour and happiness in those heavenly regions, if they had been cut off from the earth in their younger days, and been called away to heaven immediately after their conversion. Surely, if you have spent many years in public labour for Christ, and zealous devotion, you have endured cruel mockeries, imprisonments and sharp sorrows, for the sake of Christ and his gospel, and through the course of a long life, have borne a constant testimony to the faith of Jesus, there are superior glories suited to your character in heaven, which wait your arrival there.

Thus I have made it appear, in various instances, that temporal life itself, and the continuance of it, becomes a real advantage to a true christian: which was the first thing I proposed. But here is an objection which may be raised against this doctrine, *viz.* "Do not some true christians fall into grievous sins, when their life is prolonged, whereby their conscience is wounded, their garments defiled, their profession blemished, and the holy name of God and Christ blasphemed? Is long life therefore any blessing to christians, since we are so uncertain how we shall behave, and especially if we behave ill?"

Answer 1. The great and natural design, and tendency of our continuance in life, is to do more service for God and men, and obtain more blessings for our own souls; to grow more fit for heaven, and to raise and enlarge our crown. If we abuse the time given us for these blessed purposes, and indulge to sinful lusts or follies, it is highly criminal in us, and we alone must bear the blame.

2. Sometimes those very sins have been so impressed upon the conscience by the convincing spirit, as to become a means to awaken degenerate christians to greater watchfulness, greater tenderness of conscience, and greater degrees of humility, of spirituality, and heavenly-mindedness: Those very falls have been made an occasion of their rise and growth in christianity by the grace of that God, who turns darkness into light, and a curse into a blessing.

But where it is not so, God is not to be charged with injustice, in not raising us to higher degrees after our falls; our negligence and criminal indulgences of temptation, have justly forfeited his peculiar favours: And it must still be confessed, it is our own fault where length of life is not attended with growth in grace, and meetness for superior glory.

I should now proceed to the second general head proposed; but not having room to finish all my design at once, I shall conclude this discourse with these two reflections:

First Reflection.—What a rich advantage is put into the hands of a young convert! When a sinner, in his younger years of life is changed into a saint, what a blessed privilege is granted him by divine grace? And what a glorious opportunity is afforded him, the improvement whereof may reach to everlasting ages!

Happy soul, who art reconciled to God betimes, and a thousand sins in the following course of thy life are hereby prevented! Happy soul, to whom Christ has manifested his love in the beginning of life, and saved thee betimes from eternal death! According to the course of nature, thou hast a prospect of doing long service for thy Lord and thy God. Awaken all thy thoughts; consult, contrive, and seek divine advice what thou shalt do for his honour, who hath given thee so early a salvation. Pray for the direction of the blessed Spirit, to mark out the paths of thy feet, and to employ thy head, thy hands, and thy tongue, in the most honourable manner for thy God, and the most useful for the good of men.

"Remember, every hour of thy time is a part of thy treasure: Let it not be said at last, it was a prize put into the hands of a fool that had no skill nor heart to use it. God, even thy God, expects a daily revenue of glory, as the just improvement of this treasure. Let a holy zeal be kindled within thee, to do glorious services for thy Creator and thy Saviour, and to shew thy large returns of love to him who hath first loved thee. Let a pious ambition set all thy powers at work to do some uncommon good for men, and to be made an extensive blessing to all that are near thee, arise, and shine long, as a fair example of holiness in a dark and wicked world, and let every year of life brighten thy character on earth and enlarge thy reward in heaven. Be not content merely to get safe within the walls of paradise; the thief on the cross, who was called at the last hour of life, obtained this privilege; but let thy ambition rise higher, and reach at some of the more exalted stations in that kingdom. Then shall it appear that life is thine in the sweetest sense, when every stage and period of it shall add new honours to the name of thy God, give new blessings to the world, and advance the joys of thy own eternity.

Second Reflection.—If life be such a privilege to a christian, and be a part of his treasure in this sense, then what a dismal account hath an old sinner to give, who hath wasted life and time in folly and guilt, and no part of it hath been improved for his eternal happiness.

O miserable creature! Neither life nor death is thine. Bethink thyself a little, and review the dismal scene: Say to thy soul, "What have I been doing these fifty or sixty years? I

came into life guilty and unclean, and am now upon the borders of death unclean and guilty still. I was born a child of wrath, and am a son or daughter of wrath still. I was by nature an enemy to God, and I am an enemy to God still, and have no interest in his love. Life was given me that I might seek reconciliation and grace; but I have neglected and abused offered grace, and am not yet reconciled to my almighty and offended Maker. The Judge is just at hand, methinks I hear the sound of his chariot-wheels, and a dismal account have I to give of all my wasted life. I have done no real service for God, nor have given an example of holiness to men: but alas! I have been a pattern of iniquity, or at least, I have followed a multitude to do evil: Every year have I heaped up to myself new treasures of wrath in hell, instead of securing a crown in heaven, and advancing my station and my joy there. Is there any hope for me in the poor remains of life that may yet be allotted me? Is the grace of the gospel sufficient to save such a wretch as I am?"

"Yes, O sinner, it is sufficient, for Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, even the very chief of them. There is grace in the heart of the Father to receive thee; there is sufficient virtue in the blood of Christ to cleanse away all thy guilt; there is influence enough in the blessed Spirit to soften thy heart, and renew thy nature, though thou art an old hardened rebel, and a transgressor from thy very infancy. Lose not a moment more, but set about the work in good earnest; trifle no longer with grace, thou who art on the borders of the grave; fly to the hope that is set before thee; beg salvation of God with daily and nightly tears, and give him no rest till he hath heard thee. Such an importunity is like to be successful; and then, though thy temporal life hath been no benefit to thee hitherto, yet the last moments of it may possibly be accepted, and prevent thy everlasting death. God who is rich in mercy, may bestow on thee some humble place in heaven, but thou canst not expect to shine amongst the brightest saints. Thou mayest be blessed among the dead who die in the Lord, and rest from thy sorrows and thy sins; but thou hast scarce any good works to follow thee. Thy works in all the sprightly years of thy life, have been matter of guilt and shame, and it is infinite mercy, that they shall be remembered no more, But if thy heart be broken for sin, and healed by the blood of Christ, thy humble repentance, and thy holy faith in the few remaining days of old age, and death, shall be accepted through the abounding grace of the gospel. The dying thief on the cross forbids thee to despair utterly, though thou hast run a terrible risk, and ventured on the borders of destruction:

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mightily for repentance and for
of Jesus. Let no more days o
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" But if the character of a
christian be found with thee, if th
God, through the grace of Jesus,
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his mercy, till he has changed my
in the covenant of his grace.

" Is life given me as an opp
Jesus? It is he that has redeem
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Lord, and beheld him face to face

"Is this mortal life continued to me that I may spread a savour of piety amongst my fellow-creatures, and set a religious example to men? Lord, suffer me to do nothing that may lead sinners astray from thee. Pardon all the evil examples I have ever given, and let my future conduct shine in holiness, as a pattern to those that are round about me. Methinks, I would convince the world that religion has somethnig excellent and divine in it, and encourage them to the practice of strict godliness.

"Is life prolonged that I may be profitable to mankind, and have I lived thus long already to so little purpose? Though my goodness extends not unto thee, O Lord, yet I entreat that my fellow-creatures may be the better for me while I continue amongst them. O may the God of Abraham bestow on me that rich favour which Abraham received in those divine words of promise, *I will bless thee, and I will make thee a blessing;* Gen. xii. 2. I would fain live useful and beloved, that I may die desired and lamented. What a shameful thing is it when I go out of the world, that my acquaintance should say, "He is gone, but there is no loss of him."

"Have my days been prolonged thus far that my hopes of heaven might be daily increasing, that my evidences of adoption might grow stronger daily, and my soul be more prepared for heaven: Look inward then, O my soul: Hast thou acquired a more divine and heavenly temper than in years past? Art thou wrought up to a greater meetness for the inheritance on high? Are thy desires, thy appetites, and all thy powers more fitted for the business of heaven, and attempered to the blessedness of the upper world? Art thou growing fitter still for the sight of God, for converse with Christ, for the company of saints and holy angels? How are thy days and months, and years run out to waste, if thou art so much nearer death, and yet art not so much riper for heaven?

"And is it possible that a length of life should be so improved, as that my crown of glory, and my portion of happiness may be enlarged hereafter? Let my holy ambition awake at such a hint as this, and let me aspire to a superior rank among the blessed, by employing every part of life to the most noble and excellent purposes for which life is granted. Let me ever abound in the work of the Lord, since I am assured that no part of my labours shall be in vain in the Lord, or want its proper recompence. Though it is the blood of my Redeemer that has purchased all the prizes and crowns in heaven; yet if I am a swift runner in the christian race, and the race itself be long, I am fitted to receive the fairer prize: And if I am an active and victorious soldier in the army of Christ, and have served faithfully

through a tedious war, I may have reason to hope for a brighter crown. We may humbly wait for a reward in proportion to the work, according to the encouragements of the bible, while we still acknowledge that it is free and sovereign grace both enables us to hold out working, and bestows the rich reward." *Amen.*

HYMN FOR SERMON XXXIX.

The Right Improvement of Life.

AND is this life prolong'd to me?
Are days and seasons given?
Shall I not then prepare to be
A fitter heir for heaven?

I'll never let these moments pass,
These golden hours be gone;
Lord, I accept thy offer'd grace,
I bow before thy throne.

Now cleanse my soul from ev'ry sin,
By my Redeemer's blood;
Now let my flesh and heart begin
The honours of my God.

Let me no more my soul defile
With sin's deceitful toys;
Let chearful hope encreasing still,
Approach to heavenly joys.

My thankful lips shall loud proclaim
The wonders of thy praise,
And spread the savour of thy name,
Where e'er I spend my days.

On earth let my example shine;
And when I leave this state,
May heaven receive this soul of mine
To bliss divinely great.

SERMON XL.

The Privilege of the Living above the Dead.

1 Cor. iii. 22.——Whether life or death,——all are yours.

WHEN these words were explained, this doctrine was drawn from the first part of them, *viz.* "When life is given or continued to the saints, it is for their advantage."

The first thing proposed, in our meditations of this truth, was to make it appear by a variety of instances, that life is designed for the benefit of christians. I proceed now to the

Second, *viz.* to amplify and confirm this doctrine yet further by representing what various graces may be exercised on earth, which can have no place in heaven; and to discover in what respects, a living christian may be said to have some advantage over the saints that are dead.

1. The first grace I shall mention, which belongs only to this life, is, faith of things unseen, whether present or future; for in heaven this sort of faith is ended and lost; it vanishes into sight; 1 Cor. v. 7. Here in this world we walk by faith, and not by sight; but in the world above, we shall live by sight, and not by faith. *Blessed are those souls* on earth, *who have not seen, and yet have believed*; John xx. 29.

Hereby the living christian doth much honour to God, and offers him a revenue of such glory, as can never be offered to him among all the saints and angels on high. To believe that there is a God who made all things, among a world of atheists, that deny him that made them; to carry it toward an unseen God with a solemn awe of his majesty, and deep reverence and submission to his will, in the midst of thoughtless sinners who deride religion, and live without God in the world; to believe that the bible is the word of God, notwithstanding all the difficulties contained in it, and all the bold and subtle cavils that infidels have raised against it, to make this word the ground of our religion, the rule of our practice, and the foundation of our hopes, in the midst of an age of deists and heathens, that laugh at our bible and our belief together: These are noble instances of a militant faith in a world of infidelity. To believe that Jesus of Nazareth, who was hanged upon a tree without Jerusalem, and died there,

is the only begotten Son of God, the Maker and the Saviour of the world, to believe that he now lives and governs all things at the right-hand of his Father, and to trust in him who died upon the cross to give us a crown of eternal life; these are such exercises of the grace of faith, as have no place in the world of sight, where every saint beholds him face to face: Such acts as these, are only suited to our present state of absence from the Lord, and yet they are highly honourable to God and our Redeemer, *whom having not seen we love, and in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable:*—2 Pet. i. 8.

To believe that there is a heaven of glory far above the clouds, where our Lord Jesus Christ has dwelt in his human nature almost two thousand years, and where ten thousands of his blessed saints and angels are for ever enjoying divine consolations; to maintain a firm belief that there is a reward for the righteous laid up on high, while they are here trodden to the dust; to believe there is a hell, an unseen world of misery and torture, where damned spirits are punished for their rebellion against the great God, and shall for ever suffer the weight of his indignation; and to walk through this world with a holy negligence and contempt of it under the influence of these future invisibles, these eternal joys and eternal sorrows: This is a faith that gives much glory to God, while we live, and speak, and act, while we suffer and endure, as seeing him who is invisible, and firmly believing all the joys and terrors of another world, which are hidden from us by the veil of flesh and blood.

This was the faith of the ancient patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; this was the faith of Noah and Moses, and many other heroes, whose names shine with honour in St. Paul's epistle to the Hebrews; and the great and blessed God received daily honours from this their faith. In heaven all these invisibles are seen, all these futurities become present, and they are no longer matters of faith. O that this faith might overspread the earth, as sight is found all over heaven!

II. Hope and expectation of future blessings, either here or hereafter, under all present darknesses and discouragements, is another grace which may be exercised by the living saints; but among the saints that are dead there is no room nor place for it; for in heaven our hope is turned into enjoyment; *hope that is seen or enjoyed, is not hope; what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that which we see not, then do we with patience wait for it,* Rom. viii. 24. And this patient and chearful expectation under discouraging difficulties, is a glorious homage paid to God, such as the saints in heaven cannot pay him.

The living christian knows not what honour he brings to his God, when his hope for promised mercies bears itself up, while

there are no appearing prospects to the eye of sense, and in opposition to a thousand rising dangers; when he can live upon the naked promise, and be assured of the full performance, merely because his God hath spoken it. Then we give honour to God, such as the souls in heaven cannot give him, when under the renewed exercise of faith and repentance we maintain a humble hope of the pardon of sin through the promises of his gospel, even though our iniquities have been exceeding great, and though sin is every day working and striving against our best purposes, and too often bringing us under fresh guilt.

Then we glorify our blessed Redeemer so as the saints in heaven cannot glorify him, when we feel our consciences burdened with sin, and yet maintain faith and hope of acceptance with a great and holy God, through the death, righteousness, and intercession of a person whom we never saw. This is an illustrious honour done to the name, and sacrifice, and mediation of the Son of God.

Then we give glory to the blessed Spirit our enlightener, and our sanctifier, when in the midst of our own errors and darknesses, and in the midst of difficulties and cavils raised by men, we trust in his promised guidance into all necessary truth; when we walk on in the midst of temptations waiting and hoping for fresh sanctifying influences, while we feel and groan over the deceitfulness and the weakness of our own hearts, that are too ready to start aside from God like a broken bow.

Then we honour God and his gospel indeed, when we hope for our own final salvation through the blood of the everlasting covenant, having fled for refuge to the hope that is set before us, though by the wiles of the devil, we have been under strong temptations to despair, and sometimes have seemed to be forsaken of God, as Christ Jesus was when hanging on the cross: It was then that he glorified his Father and his God, by the constancy and courage of his hope, in such a manner as he was never capable of doing after that great and dreadful day; and herein his poor tempted followers have been noble imitators of their Saviour and their Lord, and have held fast their confidence in divine mercy in the midst of sore temptations, and given great glory to their God and Father.

Nor is this hope a vain presuming confidence, or a bold fit of enthusiasm, for it evidences its own heavenly and divine original, by keeping the soul pure, and holy, and humble, in the midst of all this darkness, and this disconsolate state: *He that has this hope will purify himself, even as Christ is pure*; 1 John iii. 3. A presuming hope that carries no spring of holiness in it, can neither honour God nor profit men.

But there are other occasions also in this life, for the exercise of the grace of hope, viz. amidst huge and threatening difficulties, that relate to the public interests of religion. When the feeble and doubting christian sees the affairs of the church of Christ sinking daily, he is almost ready to sink and die too, and to despair for Zion; and it is the language of his unbelief, *by whom shall Jacob arise, for he is small?* But the stronger christian, who knows how to live upon a promise, can reply, that the God of Jacob is almighty, the king of Israel is the true God and everlasting king, and the interest of the church shall rise again, even though it were drowning; for not all the floods on earth, nor even the gates of hell shall prevail against the church that is built upon Jesus the rock of ages: And Jesus himself receives his special tribute of glory from his saints on earth, while they triumph in this hope.

There are also some seasons wherein a living saint honours God in this world, by maintaining his hope in the midst of various trials that attend him in his private affairs, and especially when poverty and distress overtake him like an armed man, and he hath no other help nor hope left, but in some gracious words of promise, and some unknown appearances of providence in his behalf. Blessed are the poor who can live by faith! A christian honours God also greatly in the days of sickness, and the hour of death, when he feels nature sinking, and flesh dissolving; yet he can look upon his withering limbs without dismay, in the hope of the resurrection, and speak in the language of holy Job, "Though after my skin worms devour this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God;" Job xix. 26.

I grant that the saints who are in heaven, the spirits of the just made perfect, wait also, and hope for the resurrection of the body, and all the promised blessings of that day; but they have a bright and sure prospect of it by the light of glory, in which they read all the promises; and they have a pledge and pattern of it in the body of Jesus Christ raised from the dead, and glorified in the midst of them. Their hope lies under no darkness, no discouragement. The saints on earth therefore, in the exercise of this their hope, give a greater glory to God than those in heaven; for it struggles with mighty difficulties, and overcomes them all. It is such a hope as Abraham built on the mere promise of God, that he should have a son when he was a hundred years old, and his wife Sarah was ninety. "He hoped in God who quickened the dead, and called those things which be not as though they were; who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the Father of many nations, according to that which was spoken; so shall thy seed be. He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;" Rom. iv. 17, 18—20.

III. Liberality and compassion to the poor is another exercise of grace, for which this life only gives opportunity. The objects of our bounty on earth are both saints and sinners; for we are charged to imitate our heavenly Father, *who commands his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and his rain to fall and refresh the just and the unjust*; Mat. v. 45. But in the world to come, the saints are raised far above the want of our compassion, and condemned sinners in their long everlasting misery are forbid all refreshment.

It is in this life only, that we can shew our love to Christ himself, by refreshing the bowels of his saints. It is here that we may treasure up matter for divine approbation and solemn applause, in the great judgment-day, when the alms that have been given in a private corner, where *the left-hand has not known what the right-hand did*, shall be published with honour before that innumerable assembly. "I remember," says our blessed Lord, "I well remember, when in yonder world ye fed my hungry saints, then ye fed and nourished me; when ye gave drink to them, ye gave drink to me, and relieved my thirst; when ye bestowed garments on them, it was I that was naked, and ye clothed and covered me; and when ye visited them in sickness or in prison, I was the prisoner, I was sick, and I take it as kindly as though ye had visited and comforted me." Astonishing condescension of the Son of God! Surprizing honour put on the liberal christian! But here is the only place for acquiring these honours, though they are published hereafter.

There is no poor christian to be supplied in heaven out of the stores of your bounty, no naked saints to be clothed there. All the regions of heaven cannot afford any such object of your compassion and love. Many a saint on earth is hungry, and thirsty, and naked, and exposed to sore hardships and necessities, but necessities and hardships are unknown in heaven. Many a widow, and orphan, and poor destitute christian, lies sick and groaning as it were at the gates of glory: Let us seize the opportunity to feed, to support, and to comfort them; for there is no destitute creature, no sick, or poor, no needy widow or orphan, within the gates.

Life is given to some persons for this very end! Good Dorcas was even raised from the dead, and had her life lengthened out to make more coats and garments for the poor. Ministering to the saints is a delightful labour, and a business worth living for. In this world the rich christian has the honour of being a steward for God to feed his children; but in the world above, there are no earthly treasures to receive such a sort of consecration as this is, no alms to be offered up as an acceptable sacrifice

to God the Father, or to his Son Jesus. See then that ye practise this virtue as often as providence gives a proper occasion, and thus consecrate your substance to the Lord of the whole earth. Lend a little to the Lord in this manner, and it shall be paid with large interest: "He that hath pity on the poor lendeth to the Lord, and he will repay him;" Prov. xix. 17.

Perhaps another week, or another day shall divide you from all your earthly riches; no more of them can be laid out for God: Perhaps death may send you into the invisible world, and ye shall have no more objects of your pity for ever; *whatsoever thy hand then finds thee to do, do it with all thy might;* Eccl. ix. 10. *You that are rich in this world, be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in store a good foundation against the time to come, that ye may lay hold on eternal life*; 1 Tim. vi. 18, 19. And remember that *he that sows sparingly, shall reap sparingly; but he that soweth bountifully in his distributions to the poor, for the sake of Christ, shall also reap bountifully of the riches of glory, in the great day of reward*; 2 Cor. ix. 6.

IV. Another grace which only the living can exercise, is, charity to our fellow-creatures under their mistakes, or infirmities, and a charitable and loving frame of spirit to our fellow-christians who differ from us either in principle or practice.

Infirmities and mistakes belong only to the present state; This life is the only time when a fellow-saint can be overtaken in a fault, and when we are capable of restoring such a one in the spirit of meekness. It is here only that the proposed motive has any room or place; *consider thyself lest thou also be tempted*; Gal. vi. 1. And though we are bound to maintain an everlasting aversion to every sin, yet we should imitate and honour the forgiving mercy of our God, by speaking peace and consolation to a returning sinner.

Be not too severe in your censures, you who have been kept from temptation, but pity others who are fallen, and mourn over their fall. Do not think or say the worst things you can of those who have been taken in the snare of Satan, and been betrayed into some grosser iniquities. When you see them grieved and ashamed of their own follies, and bowed down under much heaviness, take occasion then to speak a softening and a healing word. Speak for them kindly, and speak to them tenderly. "Have compassion of them, lest they be swallowed up of over much sorrow;" 2 Cor. ii. 7. And remember too, O censorious christian, that thou art also in the body, it is rich grace that has kept thee hitherto, and the same God, who for wise ends has suffered thy brother to fall, may punish thy severity and re-

proachful language, by with-holding his grace from thee in the next hour of temptation: and then thy own fall and guilt shall upbraid thee with inward and bitter reflections, for thy sharp censures of thy weak and tempted brother. This life is the only time wherein we can pity the infirmities of our brethren and bear their burdens. This law of Christ must be fulfilled in this world, for there is no room for it in the next; *wherefore bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ;* Gal. vi. 2.

This world is the only place where different opinions and doctrines are found amongst the saints; Disagreeing forms of devotion, and sects, and parties, have no place on high: None of these things can interrupt the worship or the peace of heaven. See to it then, that you practise this grace of charity here, and love thy brother, and receive him into thy heart in holy fellowship, though he may be weak in faith, though he may observe days and times, and may feed upon herbs, and indulge some superstitious follies while thou art strong in faith, and well acquainted with the liberty of the gospel. Let not little things provoke you to divide communions on earth; but by this sort of charity, and a catholic spirit, honour the Saviour and his church here in this world; for since there are no parties, nor sects, nor contrary sentiments among the church in heaven, this christian virtue can never find any room for exercise there. This kind of charity ends at death.

V. Sympathy with mourners, and pity and relief to those that are oppressed with many sorrows, is a virtue that belongs only to the saints on earth. There are no sorrowful christians in heaven, and the various methods of comfort, which we practise toward our suffering brethren here below, are therefore impracticable in the upper world. "The God of all comfort is he who comforteth us in our tribulations, for this reason, that we may be able to comfort those that are oppressed with their heavy afflictions;" 2 Cor. i. 4. "This is pure religion and undefiled; to visit the fatherless and the widows in their afflictions, as well as to keep yourselves unspotted from the world;" James i. 27 But it is the religion of the church on earth, not the religion of heaven.

Go, then and visit thy brother in distress, visit poor afflicted and suffering christians: Go mention the promises of divine grace that belong to them in a suffering state, and lead them to rest upon some happy promise: Go teach them the benefit of afflictive circumstances: Let the twelfth chapter to the Hebrews be your text, and raise many a sweet inference for the support of sufferers. Tell them of the fruits of holiness that grow upon the bitter tree of earthly sorrows; and that the wood

of the cross blossoms with grace and glory. Put them in mind of the examples of divine deliverance, when there has been no outward prospect of help and hope. Lead them to a meditation of the heavenly state: Point their thoughts upward: Direct their faith and their hope thither: teach them to look at the things that are unseen and eternal, that they may be able in the language of faith to say, "These light afflictions which are but for a moment, are working for us an eternal weight of glory;" 2 Cor. iv. 17.

There are no sorrows among the inhabitants of heaven, no sufferings there, no pain, no complaint; nor is there any need of your consolations: This is a work you cannot do in paradise, but God delights to see his children here comfort one another in their travels through this valley of tears, this tiresome wilderness; 1 *Thess.* iv. 18. Then let us give our fellow-christians their due of consolation, and offer to our God the sacrifice of his delight.

VI. Forbearance and forgiveness of real or supposed injuries, is a grace to be practised only by the living christian.—Christ Jesus our Lord demands it, and lays a bar upon your hopes of the forgiveness of God, if ye refuse it to your fellow-creatures; *Mat.* vi. 14, 15. And the great apostle entreats you to practise it. *Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man hath a quarrel against any: Even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye*; Col. iii. 12, 13. Charity, or love, as it should be translated, suffers long, beareth all things, and hopeth all things; and though considered in the general notion of love to the saints, it lives for ever in heaven; yet these special exercises of it belong to this world. Charity or love is not easily provoked, it thinketh no evil, gives every thing the best turn that it will bear, and puts the best sense upon all things that are spoken. O that every living christian might adorn his profession with the exercise of this virtue; 1 *Cor.* xiii. 4—8.

Meekness is a grace which has no place in the upper world, in this respect, that it has no trials there. Glorify God your Saviour therefore in the days of your trial here below, and be ye meek and lowly as he was; be ye slow to anger, and swift to forgive, as God your Father is. When you hear a word of offence or reproach spoken, and feel the rising ferment of the blood, watch against it, subdue it: This is the hour of battle, see that ye come off conquerors. When there is a word of bitternesss upon your tongue, stifle it, and keep silence, subdue the temptation, and prevent that sin; give glory to God in this manner, which the saints in heaven cannot do.

"Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: Be not overcome with evil; but overcome evil with good;" Rom. xii. 19—21.

Love is a virtue that flourishes in heaven, it grows high, it spreads wide, and it shines bright in the upper world. Love is a grace that out-lives faith and hope, and endures for ever. There is no such union of hearts, no such sacred bonds of affection, as are found among the saints on high. Heaven is the very element and region of love; but it is all love to God, love to Christ, and to our fellow-saints: For love to enemies is not known in that country, because there is no enemy there. To love them that hate us, to bless them that curse us; to pity, and forgive, and pray for those that injure us; these are not only noble singularities of the christian religion, which are not known amongst all the catalogues of heathen virtues, but neither are they practised in the heavenly world. As glorious and sublime as they are, yet they are never found among *the spirits of the just made perfect:* Those holy souls, are all far above the reach of malice, hatred, and enmity; there are no objects there for them to exercise these divine virtues upon. Love to enemies therefore dwells only amongst the living saints: To forgive injuries, is the glory that is peculiar to christians in this mortal state, and our blessed Saviour has a most peculiar revenue of honour from it.

But besides the honour that Christ and his gospel receive from such a kind and charitable conduct, there is a pleasure in this victory over resentment, that far exceeds the pleasure of revenge which is the delight of the wicked: And it is a pleasure also, which the saints above cannot partake of; for there are no offences, no injuries, no provocations there: This life alone is the time to forgive, and to be forgiven. Now who is there among us, that would not seize the opportunity of every injury and offence to practise a glorious duty, and enjoy a pleasure which the blessed in heaven cannot taste?

VII. Self-denial and mortification of sin, belongs also to this life alone. It is the first lesson in the school of Christ, *to deny ourselves daily, if we will be his disciples;* Luke ix. 23. but it is the lesson of the school and not of the palace; a lesson for earth and not for heaven; for in the world above, our duty is all delight, and there is no need of contradicting our own pleasure, or our interest, in order to please or serve our God, or our brother. In those holy regions every part of our work is congenial to our sanctified natures, and with resistless appetite and inclination we shall pursue all the duties that belong to that happy state.

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shame and inward pain at the heart, as are necessary to that duty of repentance that is required here on earth; for there is nothing must break in upon their perfect peace or joy in heaven. As God is said not to remember their iniquities, because he does not remember them in order to punish, so the saints above are not said to repent of sin, because they have no such shame and grief accompanying it as whilst they dwelt upon earth, and which are some of the most remarkable ingredients in our repentance.

But we may suppose there is among them some sort of holy self-displicency, and something of a sacred regret, that ever they offended such a God, and such a Saviour? There will be surely an inward and hearty disapprobation of their former sinful ways whenever they think upon them: And, indeed, without some reflection on their former guilt and misery, they can never give due glory to Christ their Redeemer, who rescued them from their sorrows and their sins. But all the painful and shameful attendants of this grace of repentance must be banished from heaven, because it is a state of perfect joy and peace.

IX. Patience and submission to the will of God under all manner of painful providences, gives glory to God here on earth, such as the saints in heaven cannot give him. We are taught indeed to say, *Lord, thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven:* But it is the preceptive will of God, or the will of his commands, which is here signified, not his providential will, whereby he punishes; for there is no affliction in heaven, and therefore there is no such sort of submission, no exercise of patience there: They obey the will of his commands in perfection there, and God himself has no will that they should suffer, or endure sorrow.

Shew then, O believers, your submission to the will of God, here, as dear and obedient children, when your heavenly Father sees it needful to chasten you; Heb. xii. 6—11. *If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not? Give him reverence therefore when he corrects you, and be ye in subjection to the Father of spirits and live.* It is only children under age that their earthly fathers scourge and chastise; such are christians in this world, the sons of God in their infant state: but when the children are grown up to manly age, they have no more chastisement; such are the saints in heaven, who are *grown to the fulness of the measure of that stature* which God designs for them in Christ. This life therefore is the only time when you can honour the sovereignty and the wisdom of God your Father, when he sees fit to take his rod in hand, and to instruct you in righteousness.

X. A sacred compassion for perishing sinners, and longing

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constraining love, to win the hearts of their children to God, to persuade them to accept of the grace of Christ, and snatch them as brands out of the burning. Let friends and dearest relatives, let masters and rulers of families, lay hold on every just occasion to speak of the things of God to those that are near them.—Life is the only time to express our zeal for God, and love to souls, in such a manner as this. When we pray, *Thy kingdom come*, we should awaken our endeavours to gain some new subjects to Christ.

Come, let us all engage our own consciences in this sacred and compassionate work, while we consider, that *to-day is the accepted time, now is the hour of salvation.* God may put an end to our own lives, or the lives of our friends to-morrow, and either their death or ours will prevent this sort of work for ever. Then we can speak no more, or they can hear us no more: They will be for ever out of the reach of our compassionate desires to save them. We may send our bitter sighs, and our fruitless groans, after them, when they are gone down to darkness without hope; and we may feel the inward anguish of a sharp and painful repentance, while, through our neglect, and their own folly and wickedness, they are cursing the day of their birth and crying out, in full despair, under the torture of divine vengeance.

XI. Another grace which can be exercised only in this life, is holy zeal, and boldness in the profession of christianity, with courage in suffering for Christ. These are virtues that belong only to our mortal state; these are made necessary to the saints, by the opposition that is raised against true religion by the men of this world. Here in this world, *they that will live godly in Christ Jesus, must suffer persecution*; 2 Tim. iii. 12. Our Saviour himself, in the first publication of his own gospel, *endured the contradiction of sinners against himself*; he sealed his doctrine with his own blood, and has given his followers a glorious example of a suffering zeal and holy fortitude. Imitate him who *endured the cross, and despised the shame*; Heb. xii. 2, 3.

This sort of virtues doth not belong to the heavenly state; for there is no opposition made to truth and holiness: There are no such trials of our zeal and courage in heaven; courage to speak boldly for Christ, and zeal to give him public glory, by maintaining his gospel in the face of terror and death; for there are no infidels, no sinners, no enemies in all the heavenly regions. There are no threatening tyrants, no persecuting powers, no penal laws in the upper world: No prisons, no fires, no gibbets nor axes there for the followers of the Lamb; no cruel mockings nor so much as a reproachful word: but the greater our zeal is

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dead. Here an objection or two will arise that may require an answer.

Objection I.—But is not heaven always represented as a state of perfection? Is not grace and holiness more complete there than ever they have been, or can be in the time of our mortal life? And yet how can it be a state of greater perfection, if so many graces are wanting there?

Answer.—These graces which belong to the living saint, and have no place among the happy dead, are but the various exercises of a sanctified mind, arising from some imperfections in our present state. Faith is owing to our want of enjoyment: Patience, courage, compassion, forbearance, forgiveness, repentance, and such like graces, are owing to the sins, the sorrows, or the temptations that are found in this world only. The follies, the mistakes, the infirmities of ourselves, or our fellow-christians, or the wickedness of the world wherein we live, are the only things that give occasion for the exercise of such graces as I have now mentioned; therefore in a perfect state there is no room for them.

Yet every saint in heaven has a sanctified nature, which is the root and spring of all these graces, and they would appear in glorious exercise again, if there were any objects, or occasions, or seasons proper to excite them. Therefore the saints above are not defective in any virtue or grace, though they have no actual exercise of several of them in heaven. So God himself would not be in himself less merciful if he appeared in any province of his dominion where there was no creature in misery, and consequently no proper object for mercy. He is a God of infinite compassion and forgiveness still, though he has no immediate new exercises of them in heaven, in a world where no sinners are: for sin and misery are the only proper occasions of forgiveness and mercy. Thus the saints in heaven are perfect in grace and holiness, even though there are no proper objects or occasions, for this holiness or this grace to manifest itself in such peculiar instances as I have been describing in this discourse.

II. How can it be said, that a living christian has any advantage above the dead? Is not heaven better than earth? And upon that account, is not death often represented to us under most pleasing colours in the gospel, as it is an escape from the sins and sorrows of this present state, and as it conveys us into the world of blessed spirits, where there are infinite advantages above any thing to be enjoyed in this life!

Answer.—Though the living saint has some advantages which the dead cannot partake of, yet it is very true, that the

honours, the pleasures, the joys, the perfections, and the advantages of heaven, when summed up together, are far more and greater, and are infinitely preferable to those on earth; but they are not at all of the same kind. When we compare the state of grace and the state of glory together, we may boldly say, the state of glory has vastly the preference; and St. Paul himself thought so, Phil. i. 21, 23. *To be dissolved, and to be with Christ, is far better* than to dwell in this sinful world. He asserts it, that death would be his own gain; yet still he allows there are some advantages of this life, which death would deprive him of; for, says he, *for me to live* in the flesh, will be for the honour of Christ in his churches; and I shall have this fruit of my life, even the *furtherance of your faith and joy*; verses 22, 25.

When we are encouraging christians to live above the fear of death, we represent to them all the glories and felicities of the future world, which are infinitely superior to all things we can enjoy in this life. But while we continue here on earth, under the difficulties and hardships of the present state, *we have need of patience, that when we have done the will of God, we may receive the promises*; Heb. x. 36. And we have need of all those peculiar advantages to be set before us, which can belong to our stations here on earth, on purpose to support our patience, to bear us up under present burdens, and make us active in present duties: Although it must be still confessed, that all those advantages of this life, joined with our present sins and sorrows, are much inferior to the actual taste and fruition of the joys of heaven, where sin and sorrow are known no more.

This thought very naturally leads me to the improvement and conclusion of my discourse, which I shall wind up briefly in these four practical inferences:

Infererence I.—Since there are many virtues and duties which belong only to this present life, "let us lose no opportunity for the practice of them, for the next day, or the next hour, may put it for ever out of our power to practise them." Eternity is a long duration indeed, but it will never afford us one season for visiting the sick, for feeding the hungry, or for charity and meekness towards those who injure us: Eternity itself will never give us one opportunity for the pious labours of love toward the conversion of sinful acquaintance and relatives. O let us not suffer this precious lamp of life to burn in vain, or weeks, and days, and hours to slide away unemployed and useless. Let us remember, that while we are here, we work for a long hereafter; that we think, and speak, and act with regard to an eternal state, and that in time we live for eternity. Let us call up all our powers to action and diligence, that not a day of our short

lives may pass away, but what may turn to our account in the years of eternity. While God is pleased to delay our heaven, let our continuance on earth be filled up with the various exercise of such graces as are suited to our present stations. Let this be a new spring and motive to our zeal, that we are doing such honours to God and our Saviour here on earth, of which none of the saints above are capable, and for which this life is the only season: And let it appear in the day of retribution that the length of our life here on earth, has been a great, and real, and everlasting advantage to us, by preparing us for a higher station after death, and a fairer inheritance in that world which is everlasting.

II. "Though your hopes of heaven be never so well grounded, yet be not too impatient of dwelling longer on the earth: And though your burdens and sorrows may be very great in life, yet be not too hasty and importunate in your desires of death." Support yourself under all the fatigues, trials and difficulties of the present state, with this consideration, that you are now employed in such service for God, and paying such a tribute of honour to him in your suffering circumstances, as all the saints in heaven cannot do Some of the children of God in this world have been too impatient of life, and too eager in their importunities for death and the grave. Job and Elijah were great favourites of heaven, but they failed a little in this point: And God, in the course of his providence, afterward made it appear what eminent service he had for them both to do before they left this world. Elijah was designed to reform the whole nation of Israel from idolatry, and Job to be parent of a new large family, and give the world an example of God's rewarding providence. *If life be yours*, O christians, and be numbered among your possessions, be not too hasty to part with it, nor to throw away that talent which may yet in days to come be employed to the signal honour of thy God and Saviour.

III. "If life be almost spent, and you have done little for God, see that in your last, your dying hours, if possible, you speak and act for his glory. Let not the whole season of life quite pass away, and be turned over like a blank leaf which has none of the praises of God* written upon it. A word of warning from a death-bed may make a deep and happy impression on those that hear it, and through divine grace may save a soul; and if so, thou shalt hear of it again with honour

* It was a custom in former days for merchants in their books of account to have "Laus Deo, or Praise to God," written in the beginning of every leaf, and it stood on the head of the page in large and fair letters, to put them always in mind, that in their human affairs they should carry on a divine design for the glory of God.

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Blessed Spirit, lead me to the practice of the most useful duties, that my service may be of a large extent both to God and man. Now let me study and contrive, wherein I may best promote the interest of Christ and his gospel here on earth. Let me bear the burdens of life with a holy satisfaction: Let me endure the fatigues of labour with a sacred pleasure: Let me resist the temptations, let me sustain the sorrows of life like a good soldier of Christ in the present field of battle. Heaven will have other business for me, and proper work of its own: That is the place of joy and triumph.

"Forgive, O my God, all my slothfulness in duty, and my impatience of suffering. Let this new and glorious motive possess my spirit powerfully, and influence all my future conduct, that when the messenger of death shall tell me, I must be employed in this sort of work no more, I may look back from the borders of eternity, and rejoice that I have been assisted by divine grace, to do so much for God on earth; and when I am called away from the present stage of action, I may be received by my great Master at the gates of heaven, with a *Well done good and faithful servant, come, enter into the joy of thy Lord. Amen.*

HYMN FOR SERMON XL.

The Privilege of the Living above the Dead.

AWAKE my zeal, awake my love,
And serve my Saviour here below,
In works which all the saints above,
Which holy angels cannot do.

My faith and hope may see the Lord,
Though veils of darkness lie between:
Hope shall rest firm upon his word,
And faith rejoice in things unseen.

Awake my charity and feed
The hungry soul, and clothe the poor;
In heav'n are found no sons of need,
There all these duties are no more.

Subdue thy passions, O my soul,
Maintain the fight, thy work pursue,
Daily thy rising sins controul,
And be thy vict'ries ever new.

The land of triumph lies on high,
There are no fields of battle there;
Lord, I would conquer till I die,
And finish all the glorious war.

Let ev'ry flying hour confess
I gain thy gospel fresh renown,
And when my life and labours cease,
May I possess the promis'd crown.

SERMON XLI.

Death improved to our Advantage.

1 Cor. iii. 22.—Whether life or death,—all are yours.

THE chief thing which the apostle has in his eye in these verses, is to represent the glory and grandeur, the treasures and possessions that every believer is a partaker of, by virtue of his interest in Christ: and to shew, that whatsoever persons or affairs a christian has to do with in the natural, the civil, and the religious life, they shall all turn to his benefit some way or other. All the circumstances that attend him while he continues here in this world, and even his departure out of it too, shall work for his good. Death is numbered among his possessions as well as life. Death may be terrible to flesh and blood, for it is a curse in its original nature and design, and sinners will find and feel the curse of it; but it is transformed into a blessing to the saints by the abounding grace of the gospel.

I confess, it is a christian's own death, that the holy writer seems chiefly and most particularly to design and intend here: And this I shall most largely insist upon. But since death in all its circumstances and attendants, in all the extent of its dominion, and with all its power, is under the sovereign management of God our heavenly Father; it is constrained to subserve his kind and gracious purposes to his own people, in all its forms and appearances. And I think upon this account, that I shall not transgress the apostle's great and general design, if I take the dreadful name of DEATH, in its widest and most formidable extent of power, and with relation to all its victories, and shew how, even in this largest sense, it is appointed to subserve the glory of God, and the kingdom of Christ, and by the grace of the new covenant, it is rendered useful and beneficial to every true christian; on this account therefore it may be numbered amongst his possessions. *Death is yours.*

With this view I shall endeavour to run through these five general heads following, and improve each of them, in a few particulars, to the benefit of christians, agreeably to the design of my text.—Death is made useful to a saint, when we consider it,

I. As reigning over all mankind in general.—II. As seizing on impenitent and unpardoned sinners.—III. As taking captive the bodies of the saints.—IV. As depriving us of our dear relations and kindred. And,—V. As bringing our own bodies down to the dust.

I confess, I was very unwilling to leave the death of Christ out of this catalogue; for his death is not only the most eminent blessing to every christian, but it is also the price that purchased all other blessings in time, and in eternity. It is the death of Christ that may be called the christian's richest treasure, for it procures for him all the treasures of grace and glory. It is the fruit of his death, that *all things are ours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or things present, or things to come.* It is his death that gives truth and virtue to the words of my text, and to all the rich and spreading comments upon it, that faith can make here on earth, and that our souls shall taste and enjoy hereafter in heaven.

Yet when I consider, that the death of Christ is more directly expressed in many other scriptures, and does not seem at all to have been the design of St. Paul in this text: and when I survey what a vast and copious subject I must enter into, if I recount the riches of blessing that are derived from this spring, I chuse to refer that subject to another season. I proceed therefore according to the order I have proposed, to treat of the various advantages to be derived from this proposition, *Death is yours.*

First, The death of mankind in general shall be made profitable to believers. The death of all the sons and daughters of Adam, shall promote the improvement of the children of God, in knowledge, grace, and holiness; for it instructs them in three most useful lessons.

1. It gives them a most powerful and sensible lecture on the vanity of man. A burying place filled with tombs, is a lively book of human frailty: It repeats the melancholy lesson in every leaf. Each little grave-stone becomes a preacher of vanity to the living, even in the profound silence of the dead. This is the doctrine of every rising hillock, this is the universal theme: And every stately monument there strikes the beholder with the same mortifying truth: though perhaps it swells with many pompous titles and images of honour. And this lesson of vanity stands written there still in fair and indelible characters, though the name of the dead, and all their praises be quite worn out. Dust and ashes, even without an inscription, and without a monument, are silent but powerful teachers.

Alas, what is man in his best estate! A poor and mortal dying creature! When we read the histories of past ages and

foreign nations, and find that those whole nations and ages are all dead and mingled with the dust, and even those, who once made a great bustle and figure in this world, are now but an empty name, we cry out, "What vain creatures we are!" When we behold our neighbours and our acquaintance on the right-hand, and on the left, dropping away all around us; when we see one following another daily down to the grave of silence, it is a very natural and just reflection: "Alas, how frail is man!" When we behold the young, the healthy, the fair, and the strong, the rich, and the powerful, together with the poor, the feeble, and the slave, all yielding to the common law of death, and turning into earth and rottenness, we have just occasion to cry out, "What a vain empty thing is human nature, even the best of it: A piece of pretty mouldering clay: These bodies of ours are fine and curious engines but made of the dust, and to dust they return again."

This is the common state, situation, and view of things in all seasons, and in every generation. But when we fix our thoughts on some special seasons or causes of mortality, when we think of a famine or a pestilence that sweeps away thousands in a few days, that empties the whole streets in a night or two, and lays towns or cities desolate; when we read of wars and battles that overspread the mountain with slaughter, and cover vast plains with human carcases; when we hear of storms at sea that drown many hundreds at once, and perhaps some thousands sink down to death in their floating habitations, then we are more feelingly penetrated with a sense of our vanity, then we sigh and groan aloud and break out into this mournful language? *O Lord! hast thou made all mankind in vain?* Ps. lxxxix. 49. How awful is thy government! How terrible are thy judgments, thou Almighty Sovereign of life and death! The ancient saints have made such remarks often, and mixed these scenes of mortality with their pious thoughts, and turned them into devotion: They have drawn many serious and pathetic inferences from such meditations on death, and vented their musings of thought in holy language.

(1.) "Shall man compare himself with God? Mortal man *that dwelleth in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, and who is crushed before the moth! Shall he set himself to contend with the eternal God his Maker;*" Job. iv. 17—19. Again:

(2.) "What little reason have we to be proud and boastful! Poor dying mushrooms, who start up for a few hours, but cannot assure ourselves of to-morrow! To-day we swell and look big among men, to-morrow we are a feast for worms. *Our days are as a hand's breadth; verily every man at his best estate is altogether vanity;*" Ps. xxxix. 5. Again:

(3.) "How vain and fruitless a thing is it to *put our trust*

in princes, or in the son of man in whom there is no help? His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth, in that very day, his thoughts perish; Ps. cxlvi. 3, 4. Man is too weak a thing to encourage or support our confidence." And:

(4.) "What a necessary duty is it then to fix our constant dependance upon God, even in all the common affairs of life! *Let us not say therefore, that to-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy, and sell, and get gain; whereas ye know not what will be on the morrow? For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away; for that ye ought to say, if the Lord will, we shall live to do this or that;* James iv. 13—15. And it is the same inference that holy David makes more than once upon a survey of the mortality of man, in the Psalms just before cited, *Lord, what wait I for? My hope is in thee;* Ps. xxxix. 11. *Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God, who keepeth truth for ever;* Ps. xlvi. 5, 6. The Lord is an everlasting friend, he lives when creatures die, and fulfils his word of truth, when the words of princes perish with their breath."

2. The death of mankind in general shews us the dreadful evil and desert of sin. It discovers to us the awful holiness and terrible Majesty of God; and it teaches us what a sublime value he puts upon his own law, and how fearfully he avenges the violation of it. I join these three things together, because they stand so nearly connected in the divine economy.

(1.) The universal death of mankind shews us, what a dreadful and heinous evil there is in sin, and, what wide destruction it has deserved. *By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned;* Rom. v. 12. *For the wages of sin is death*; Rom. vi. 23. Man was made innocent, and while he continued obedient, he was immortal: Transgression and death came in together: A formidable pair! Two dreadful names, big with mischief and ruin to human nature. When we see the dying agonies of poor mankind, our fellow-creatures, our brethren in flesh and blood, let us remember the sin of our common father, that first subjected him and all his posterity to death; and let us reflect upon the dreadful evil that is contained in the nature of every sin; for it deserves death at the hand of God. Alas, how often has the best of us deserved to die, for our transgressions have been multiplied without number.

(2.) The death of all mankind makes a solemn discovery to us of the terrible Majesty of God and the justice that attends his government. He will not pass by the guilt of his rebellious creatures, without a due resentment of their crimes. And even

though he pardons the sins of his own people, so as to secure them from eternal vengeance, yet they must pass through death, that they may learn what an evil and bitter thing it is to have offended against their Maker and their God.

When we see a church-yard filled with little hills of mortality, the ruins of a parish, or a spacious town, and the dust of many generations, we naturally cry out, as in Deut. xxix. 24. "Wherefore hath the Lord done thus unto this land, and what meaneth the heat of all this great anger?" The next verse will give you an answer to it; yea, every man may answer himself, *because they have forsaken the Lord their God*; they have forsaken *his covenant of life and sinned against him.* Those dreadful words, *In the day thou eatest, thou shalt die*; have been putting into execution almost six thousand years, and the *Lord's anger is not yet turned away, but his hand is stretched out still*; Is. v. 25. the vengeance of the Lord is not yet fully executed according to the just demerit of sin. Though saints are saved from the dismal consequences of death, yet God would not rescue them from dying, that they might always remember what sin deserved. Thus the death of all mankind discovers to us the awful Majesty of God our Maker, who will not be affronted by his creatures, without terrible resentment; he is a holy and jealous God.

(3.) It teaches us the high value that God has for his own law, that he will rather dash a whole creation to pieces, than suffer his holy law to be insulted and broken, without some reparation of the honour of it. The race of Adam is doomed to death, for the sake of sin against this law, and mortality and a curse spread over this lower world. Let us inure our thoughts to such reflections as these, that we may ever keep our souls in awe of the Majesty of God, and dread the thoughts of breaking his law, which he values above a whole world of men. O that sin may become the most hateful object in our eyes; it is this that has laid cities desolate, and fills the graves; it is this that has corrupted and destroyed our natures; it has turned millions of strong and well-formed bodies into dust: It has ruined the most beautiful part of God's lower creation, and is sending thousands daily to the pit of corruption and noisome darkness. It is sin has filled our nature with diseases, and sown the poisonous seeds of mortality and death in every son and daughter of Adam. A malignant and fatal poison, that has destroyed all the nations upon earth, and buried them under ground, heaps upon heaps, in above a hundred successions! But I now go on to another distinct lesson, that the death of all mankind teaches us.

3. It informs us, in a very sensible and affecting manner,

that we ourselves must shortly die, and awakens the soul to actual preparation for its departure. Heb. ix. 27. *It is appointed for all men once to die, and after death the judgment*, Joshua and David, saints and kings, tell us they *go the way of all the earth:* "The grave is the house appointed for all the living;" Job xxx. 23. When we behold one after another, made of the same flesh and blood as we are, going down to the dust in a long continual succession, we have a solemn warning, that we must shortly follow: There is no ransom in this case, no hope of safety, no door of escape, and as Solomon expresses it, *there is no discharge in this war*; Eccl. viii. 8.

A true christian takes notice of this with a pious awe upon his spirit; and when he is ready to grow drowsy and secure, the sight of a funeral, or a grave, shall rouse him out of his sleepy temper, and awaken religion into life again: When he hears of a neighbour's death, he asks his own soul, "Art thou ready? For the next summons may come to call thee away into the world of spirits, to stand before God the Judge of all."

Thus a child of God reaps some advantage by the spreading empire of death over all mankind; he makes a sacred improvement of the terrible waste that the king of terrors has made over all the earth: He learns the vanity and emptiness of man in his best estate: He grows humble and dependant on the eternal God: He reads the dreadful evil of sin on every tombstone: The death of every man calls him aloud to prepare for his own, and to be in actual readiness for his entrance into the invisible world. Happy souls, who take this warning, and stand ever prepared!

But I proceed to the next general head which I proposed;

Secondly, As the death of mankind in general, gives these divine lessons to a saint, so the death of impenitent sinners, which hath something in it very terrible, may be turned to the advantage and profit of believers, these three or four ways:

1. If we are true christians, and persecuted and injured here on earth, then the death of the wicked delivers us from our enemies, and releases us from the wrath of our oppressors. In the grave "the wicked cease from troubling, as well as the weary are at rest;" Job iii. 17.

Look back to the distance of three thousand years, and see the children of Israel on the banks of the Red-sea, rejoicing in the Lord their deliverer, when an army of Egyptian carcases floated on the waters, or were cast up in heaps upon the shore: These were the cruel oppressors of the people of God: They were drowned in the evening, and the morning light discovered

the havoc that death had made, and the salvation it wrought for Israel, in the xiv. and xv. of Exodus. See the whole city of Jerusalem, and Hezekiah at the head of them, triumphing in the Lord, when he sent the angel of death, and destroyed the besiegers: "A hundred and four score and five thousand Assyrians lay dead on the borders of the city;" Is. xxxvii. 36. "By terrible things in righteousness God answered the prayer of his saints;" Ps. lxv. 5. And at the death of Herod, the father and mother of our blessed Lord were glad, for they returned from their flight; they came from the land of Egypt, and dwelt in their own land again; and the child Jesus was saved from the murderous designs of that cruel man; Mat. ii. 19.

Such examples of advantage which the saints receive from the death of the men of violence, their impious and bloody enemies, are frequent in sacred history: And we may remark in our day, how many a time God hath saved us in Great Britain, when we have been on the borders of destruction, by the death of persecutors at home and abroad. The monarchs of the earth, have been turned down to their graves, one year after another, and the churches of God, in many nations, have found rest and deliverance.

2. The death of impenitent sinners has been many a time, the happy occasion of the conversion of a saint. There is many a holy soul, now in heaven, that was first awakened to fly from the wrath to come, by the death of some of his wicked companions in his younger years. When a snare falls suddenly, and seizes a little bird or two of the flock, the rest take wing toward heaven, and fly for safety. And happy are those souls, who take the terrible warning, who fly to the sacred refuge, and lay hold on offered grace.

When a vile wretch is seized in the midst of his companions, and his sins, and sent down to hell and destruction in a moment, the very gates of hell seem to open before our faces, to receive the rebel; such a spectacle fills the hearts of those that are near him, with amazement and terror, and hath often been the first means of sending them to the throne of grace; and, by degrees, to the gates of heaven. The story of Peter Valdo is famous on this occasion, who was a rich merchant at Lyons in France, but had no sense of inward religion, or true piety. When in the midst of feasting and merriment, he saw one of his companions struck with sudden death, he was awakened to serious thoughts of eternity: Upon this he applied himself to study the scripture, and discover the errors of the Roman church; he acquainted his friends with them, and instructed the poor, who were continual partakers of his bounty. Then being excommunicated by the

popish clergy, he retired, with some of his disciples, to the vallies of Piedmont, where he found some christians of an ancient and primitive stamp, and joining with them, established those churches which are called the Vaudois, and are famous in history, even to this day.

Bishop Burnet also tells us, in the life of the Lord Chief Justice Hale, that in his younger years he gave himself up to much frolic and vanity, till one of his loose companions fell down on a sudden, and they thought him dead: which surprizing providence sent Mr. Hale to his knees, to pray earnestly for the recovery of his companion, and laid a foundation for that life of eminent virtue and religion, which is described in those memoirs. Thus not only the death of profligate sinners, but even the appearance of their death, has been blessed to gracious purposes, for the conversion and salvation of others.

3. The death of the wicked gives the children of God glorious matter for praise to his distinguishing grace. When they see or hear of a hardened and impenitent sinner cut off in his guilt and obstinacy, and in the pursuit of his lusts, the holy soul cries out with thankfulness and zeal, "Glory be to that grace which has made the difference betwixt him and me!"

And this is still more remarkable, when a sinner dies with all the terrors of God upon him, when the sting of death enters into his heart, and sharpens all his last agonies, when conscience is awakened with all its horrors, and the soul is plunging with its eyes open into a gulf of everlasting misery. O how sensibly does this affect the heart of a true christian! He stands and wonders, and adores that rich mercy that has snatched him as a brand out of the burning. "What am I," says he, "by nature more than another, that God should have called me by his grace, and given me repentance unto life, while this poor wretch continued obstinate and impenitent? We were both sons of Adam the sinner, alienated from the life of God, and enemies to all that is holy: We were both favoured with the means of grace, and sat under the ministrations of the same gospel. Who, or what am I better than my neighbour, that God should powerfully incline my heart to accept the offered salvation! That he should have prepared me as a vessel of mercy, to be filled with glory, while my old companion has now made himself a complete *vessel of wrath*, and fitted himself for swift destruction; Rom. ix. 22, 23. By nature I was a *child of wrath*, as well as he, a rebel, and a vile transgressor, *without God*, without Christ, *and without hope:* And why was not I seized by divine justice, in those days of my rebellion, and made a sacrifice to the indignation of God? What merit was there in me, that I should be spared, while my

companion suffered under speedy vengeance? Let the freedom and riches of grace be adored for ever: It was rich and sovereign grace that spared me. And now, through the abounding mercy of God, I hope I have fled to lay hold on the refuge set before me; my heart is, in some measure, sanctified, my nature renewed, and my sins pardoned. Blessed be the Lord who hath given me *hope in death, while the wicked are driven away in their wickedness, driven far away* from hope and heaven; Prov. xiv. 32.

4. The death of impenitent sinners does another service also for the saints, in that it sensibly excites their pity and their prayers for the living. It awakens the exercise of pious charity for the souls of their friends, that are yet *in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.* A true christian, that has tasted of the grace of God, can hardly be supposed to see his impenitent neighbour seized with sudden death, and sent away to darkness, but it touches the springs of holy tenderness within him, and constrains him to speak a word to others in the same danger, and to lift up a cry to God upon their account for grace and salvation. Surely that christian is not in a right temper of mind, who can see or hear of impenitent and guilty souls seized away from his neighbourhood or his acquaintance, and plunging into eternity with horror and despair, and yet have no compassion awakened in him, no bowels of pity moving for those of his acquaintance that are involved in the same iniquities, and are yet in the land of the living, and on this side hell. Such an awful providence is like a warning-word which heaven puts into our mouths, that we may echo it with solemn horror round the neighbourhood, and try to rouze stupid sinners from their dangerous and fatal lethargy.

[Here is a proper pause in this Sermon, if it be too long to be read at once.]

But it is time now to leave this general head, and go on to the next.

Thirdly, If the death of hardened sinners turns to the advantage of the saint, the death of fellow-christians shall certainly work for his benefit too.

You will be ready to say, "What! Can the loss of good men from the earth ever be turned into a benefit? Can the death of saints bring any advantage to the survivors?" Yes, surely, if they die like christians indeed, in the lively exercises of faith and hope, and this will appear in these four particulars:

1. It confirms our faith in the gospel of Christ, and supports our holy profession. It gives us an assurance of the truth and power of our religion, above all other religions in the world, when

enables a poor feeble dying creature to face death with courage, o look beyond the limits of life and time, and venture into an nseen world with holy joy and triumph. It gives us a glorious vidence, that the principles of christianity are such, as will ustify all the labours of a holy life, and will bear us out in the rofession of it, in the midst of ridicule and mockery, of persecution and martyrdom. This surely must be a religion coming own from God, that can give the weak and unlearned such a ourage, as to encounter death itself without fear: and that not rom a stupid and senseless temper of spirit, not from a brutal ardiness, such as carries the horse and the hero into the attle, but with a clear and full discovery of God and his oliness, of our own sins and his forgiving grace, this religion can enable us to venture into his immediate presence. Iow glorious is our gospel, how divine a doctrine is this! t has wrought ten thousand such wonders by faith in the blood f Christ, as the great atonement for sin, and the only way to the Father.

A saint leaving this world, and putting off mortality, with he light of heaven breaking in upon his soul, and the beams of glory shining round about him, with divine joy and transport in his countenance, and the language of heaven upon his lips, brings he invisible world into present view: The pious spectators grow up to a sensible assurance of the glories and felicities of that invisible world: each of them sits on the borders of paradise, each of them gets a glimpse of the new Jerusalem, and all the heavenly country, and this adds new strength to his faith and hope.

2. The glorious death of our fellow-christians greatly encourages the imitation of their holy life. To see a child of God die from amongst men, leave this world with a holy contempt and sincere pleasure, and enter into the presence of his heavenly Father with a filial confidence; to see him finish his race with joy, and, as it were, lay hold on salvation, and put on his heavenly crown: This calls aloud upon us to tread in the same steps, to pursue the blessed prize, and to be *followers of them, who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises*; Heb. vi. 12. When we *mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, and see that his end his peace*; Ps. xxxvii. 37. we are animated to walk with God in the same uprightness, and to press after the same perfection. Having such *a cloud of witnesses* that have gone before us, and Christ our Lord at the head of them, *we run with patience the race that is set before us*, till we arrive at the promised glory; Heb. xii. 1.

To stand near the bed of a dying saint, and observe the

The death of fellow-sa
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the world, carries away so m
What would this world be
a cage of unclean birds, a
savage beasts, a habitation o
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concerns in the light of the last judgment, and, as it were, under the piercing rays of the great tribunal; when we hear him abasing himself to the dust in the most vilifying expressions, because of his sins, and yet rejoice in the evidences of his graces, and repeating the promises of the gospel with a pleasant hope; this teaches us to converse with our own souls in a more lively manner, about sin and forgiveness, about death and eternity; for it brings these awful themes into open view, and sets them before us in their infinite importance. This reads us a glorious lecture upon the gospel of Christ, and pardoning grace, and the sanctifying Spirit, and the hope of glory, beyond what we ever found before in the best of sermons, and under the warmest preachers.

Come, my friends, come into the chamber of a dying christian, come, approach his pillow, and hear his holy language: "I am going up to heaven, and I long to be gone, to be where my Saviour is. *Why are his chariot-wheels so long a coming?* Then with both arms stretched up to heaven, I desire to be with God. I hope I am a sincere christian, but the meanest, and the most unworthy: I know I am a great sinner; but did not Christ come to save the chief of sinners; I hope I shall find acceptance in Christ Jesus. I have trusted in him, and I have strong consolation. I have been looking into my own heart, what are my evidences for heaven? Has not the scripture said, *He that believeth shall not perish, but shall have everlasting life*; John iii. 16. Now, according to the best knowledge I have of what faith is, I do believe in Christ, and I shall have life everlasting. Does not the scripture say, *He that hungereth and thirsteth after righteousness shall be satisfied*; Mat. v. 6. Surely I hunger and thirst after it, I desire to be holy, I long to be conformable to God, and to be made more like him; shall I not then be satisfied! I love God, I love Christ, I desire to love him more, to be more like him, and to serve him in heaven without sin. I have faith, I have love, I have repentance, yet I boast not, for I have nothing of myself, I speak it all to the honour of the grace of God, it is all grace; I say then, I have faith, and repentance, and love; but faith and repentance are all nothing without Christ; it is he makes all acceptable to the Father, and I trust in him. My friends, I have built on this foundation Jesus Christ, he is indeed the only foundation: Have you not built on the same foundation too? This is my hope. Is it not your hope also? Dear brother, I shall see you at the right-hand of Christ: There I shall see our friends that are gone a little before: I shall be with them first before you. I thank you, my friends, for all your offices of love; you have prayed with me, you have refreshed me. I love

and honour you now, but I shall meet you in heaven, I go to my God and your God, to my Saviour and your Saviour*.

Would one think there could be so much pleasure in the dying chamber of a beloved friend? Surely this makes good the words of my text; if we are christians, death is ours. O this is a divine entertainment that refreshes our spirits! And while sorrow trickles from our eyes for the loss of a departing christian-friend; there is a sympathy of joy that works powerfully at the heart, and the heaven within us breaks out and shines through our tears. Then, with a wondrous mixture of the painful and the pleasant, with a sweet confusion of pious passions, we bid our dying brother, "Farewell."

At such a season as this, our thoughts are led upward to heaven, and forward to the great resurrection. We open the eye of faith, and see the holy soul ascending to God; we behold the weak and languishing body rising glorious out of the grave, shaking off the dust, and putting on its immortality: While our faith attends the spirit of our departing friend to heaven, we grow willing and desirous to be gone too; and being brought so near to the gates of glory, we would fain take our leave of mortal things, and accompany the expiring saint to the joyful world of spirits. The memory of such a scene, and such a hour, will dwell upon our thoughts long, and support our own hope of victory, when we shall be called to conflict with the same enemy. Having such a witness gone before us, we shall not only *run our race with patience*, through all the stages of it, but *finish our course with joy*.

There is a sacred courage derived many times to a weak believer, by attending the last moments of a dying saint ascending to the upper world. "I was afraid of death, says a feeble christian, till I saw my neighbour die: He was once a sinner as well as I, and he had his imperfections and failings in this life, as I have mine; I humbly hope I have practised the same repentance as he has done, I have trusted in the same Saviour, I have ventured my all upon the same gospel, and travelled on in the same path: surely there is forgiveness for me too; surely the sting of my death shall be taken away also; and, through grace, I shall join in his triumph; *O death where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory*; 1 Cor. xv. 55.

This observation has been most gloriously exemplified in the death of martyrs: When the spectators that have been heathens, or but almost christians, have been strangely animated to profess the gospel boldly, while they have seen the most amazing courage

* These are some of the dying words of the Reverend Mr. Samuel Rosewell, when, with some other friends, I went to visit him two days before his death, and which I transcribed as soon as I came home, by their assistance.

of these glorious sufferers for Christ. And those that have been doubtful and trembling believers, whose faith was wavering, and who were ready to let go their profession, have ventured through blood and torments, and death, with a divine resolution, when they have beheld the martyrs meet the same death and torments with a sacred bravery of soul.

A multitude of fearful christians may be animated and encouraged to travel through the dark valley, and to cross the cold flood of death, by the example of a single saint, who has passed that important hour with success and honour. So you have seen a flock of sheep stand doubtful and delaying on the bank of some little brook; but when the first and second have made their way through it, the rest venture over in multitudes, and leap the ditch with the greatest ease, the difficulty and the danger vanish at once, when they have seen a forerunner leading the way.

Thus it hath been made evident in several instances, that the death of fellow-christians is ours. It shall turn to our great advantage, through the influences of the gospel, and the Spirit of grace, where christians die like themselves, in the exercise of a joyful hope. It confirms our faith in the gospel of Christ, it encourages our imitation of their holy life, it makes earth and this life less pleasant to us, and heaven more desirable, and it instructs us how to die.

But if a saint go out of this world under much darkness and terror, this is commonly to be supposed a divine chastisement for the criminal indulgence of some temptations, or some unwatchful steps he has taken in the course of his life; for God will make his own people know, many times by painful experience, that it is an evil and bitter thing to backslide and depart from him. A wise and pious spectator upon this occasion, will take warning by the terrors of the Lord, and by the punishment of his fellow-christian, to avoid that guilt, and those criminal indulgences, which have provoked God to leave his brother to darkness, even in the hour of death: And this may be a means to awaken him to a most watchful course of holiness, lest he fall under the same strokes of anger from his heavenly Father, and suffer his displeasure in that awful moment, when he would most earnestly wish for the sweetest sense of his love. Thus I have finished the third general head, and shewed that the death of the saints may be richly improved to the advantage of the living.

The Recollection.—" Come, my soul, who art daily conversing with the affairs and concerns of life, come now, and meditate on the name of death; It is a name that carries much terror in it

to nature; come, and see whether thou canst not derive a blessing from it, by the instructions of the gospel, and the aids of grace. "Thou hast heard the lessons that the death of mankind in general should teach thee: Enquire now what thou hast learned of them: Hast thou seen the vanity of man as a mortal dying creature? It is an easy matter to say, "Alas, we must all die:" But hast thou felt the penetrating force of this truth? And does it influence thy whole conduct? Art thou not still, at every turn, putting thy confidence in one creature or another, whose breath is in his nostrils, and whose death disappoints thy hope? Or hast thou removed thy dependance from all creatures to God, and fixed thy hope in him that lives for ever? O blessed effect of the meditation on death?

"Again, Hast thou seen the heinous evil of sin in the spreading desolation that death has made over this lower world? Remember that it received its commission from the justice of God, almost six thousand years ago, and from his law which sin had broken: The dreadful execution proceeds to this day, and it will proceed till there be no sinner upon earth. Sin is the spring of all this havoc of the lives of men. It is sin that has deserved all these tremendous executions of wrath: And yet, O my soul, how often hast thou indulged this mischief, to play about thy bosom, like a harmless thing! Come, view the dismal effects of it, in the death of millions, and learn to hate and renounce it for ever. It is no small evil that could awaken the indignation of God at this rate, and diffuse it so widely, over so large and so glorious a part of his creation, as the whole nature and race of man.

"Again, I would enquire, has the death of mankind taught me effectually, that I must shortly die? And have I been excited, to make a suitable provision for this awful and important hour, since I must not, I cannot escape it? "Not only the death of mankind in general, but the death of wicked men may instruct me in some useful lessons too. Here I learn how God rescues his children from the rage of oppressors, when he smites them down to death, and lays all their fury silent in the dust. Thus death itself becomes a deliverer to the saints, by destroying their cruel persecutors. "I learn also, that when early or sudden death has seized a bold sinner, it is a loud warning-word to all his companions. When I see such terrible examples in the course of providence, let my soul stand in awe and fear.

"And if God has distinguished me by his mercy, if he has pardoned my guilt, and sanctified my corrupt nature, if he has made me one of his own children, and prepared me for dying, when he summons others away unpardoned, unsanctified, unprepared, let all my powers be excited to bless the name of the Lord

r his saving love. I was also a child of sin and wrath, but di-
ne grace has made the difference. It is grace that has snatched
e from the very brink of the pit of hell, and is training me up for
aven. "And while I adore thy distinguishing mercy, O my
od, to me, I would pity and pray for poor heedless and regard-
is sinners, that are following one another in a dismal succes-
on, down to the gates of death. O may their eyes and souls
e awakened in their day of life and hope, lest death seize them,
id send them farther down to everlasting darkness and despair!
But if such lessons, as these, be derived from the death of sin-
rs, how much more benefit may be drawn from the dying hours
a sincere christian, especially if his heart be strong, and his
ith lively!

"Here, I see the gospel of Christ in some of its power
id glory, when I see a christian under all the weaknesses and
nguishings of nature, meeting death without terror, and *over-
ming his last enemy by the blood of the Lamb.* I see the saint
l serene and peaceful, even in the agonies of dying nature, and
nidst the sorrows of lamenting friends. He has heaven in
ew, and he bids farewell to earth with holy joy: Shall I not
nitate the faith and holiness of his life, which laid a foundation
r so peaceful and glorious a death? Do I not feel my soul a
tle more weaned from the world, since such a pious friend has
ft it? Has not death lost some of its frightful appearances,
nce I have actually seen it conquered? Do I not feel my heart
nting and breathing toward the society above, since I have
nother friend gone thither? Does it not seem a more easy thing
me to lay down this tabernacle, to part with flesh and blood,
nd to venture into those unseen regions, since I have beheld
y fellow-christian go before me? He has made the great and
lemn experiment, and surely I should have courage to follow:
e has given evident proof, that there is a sacred power in the
ospel, the promises and the grace of Christ, to convey the
oul safe through the dark shadow of death, without surprise
nd consternation: And has not my soul the same rich en-
couragements, the same promises of grace, and the same gos-
el of hope?

"O my Redeemer, and my Lord, hear a humble suppliant,
fluence my soul by thy rich grace, to keep my faith awake, my
onscience undefiled, and my evidences for heaven ever bright
nd clear; And when my appointed hour comes, that solemn and
nal hour, "*let me die the death of the righteous,* and my de-
arture be like his;" Num. xxiii. 10. "Is death an enemy to
nature, and does it carry terror in the name? Yet since thou
ast subdued this enemy, and taken it captive, to serve the pur-
oses of thy love, since thou hast numbered it, and written it

down among the possessions of thy people: since thou hast taught so many of thy followers to triumph over it; let me also, blessed Jesus, let me be enabled to meet it with holy fortitude, and a lively hope. O let me follow *the footsteps of the flock*, into the world of spirits, with a sacred pleasure, though it be through a dark passage. And as those, who went before me, have taught me to dare to die, so let my dying moments encourage those who come after me, to venture into death, at thy call, without terror and without reluctance." *Amen.*

HYMN FOR SERMON XLI.

Death of Mankind, Saints and Sinners, Improved.

HAS death such vast destruction made?
Does every hour increase the dead?
Have I beheld the guilt of sin,
That brought this spreading mischief in.

Great God! How awful and how just!
Thy law, that turns our flesh to dust!
O let me learn how frail am I,
And all my life prepare to die.

When impious wretches yield their breath,
And go unpardon'd down to death,
Awake my soul, adore the grace,
That gave thee a repenting space.

But when a saint with cheerful air
Meets his last foe, and feels no fear,
Our faith, our hope, and courage grow;
We learn to face the tyrant too.

We could renounce our all things here,
And wish that moment would appear,
When we shall leave this world and rise
To meet the joys above the skies.

SERMON XLII.

The Death of Kindred improved.

1 Cor. iii. 22.——Whether life or death,——all are yours.

HAPPY and immortal had Adam been, and all his children, if he had not ventured to break the command of his Creator: Life had been theirs in the most glorious sense of it; and death had not been known. But when sin entered into the world, death followed close behind it, according to that just and solemn threatening, *In the day thou eatest, thou shalt surely die;* Gen. ii. 17. And what a dismal havoc has this enemy made amongst the inhabitants of our world! It has strewed the earth with carcases, and turned millions of human bodies into dust and corruption. The very name of death spreads a terror through all nature: But as dreadful and formidable as it is in itself, the grace of Christ makes a blessing of it, and sanctifies it to the advantage of his own people.

In the former discourse on this subject, we have learned some divine lessons from death, in its widest extent of dominion. The death of all mankind yields some special advantage to a saint: He is taught to reap some benefit from the death of impenitent sinners, though it carry along with it, such a fearful train of attendants, and draw after it a long eternity of torments. He knows how to derive some advantage from the death of his fellow-christians; and whether they die in the joy of faith, and serenity of spirit, or whether their sun sets in a cloud, and fears and doubts attend them, in that important hour, still he is taught to profit by it. In these three instances, it appears that death is ours: Death is in this respect made the treasure and property of a christian, as he is instructed to improve it, to his own sacred interest, and to the welfare of his soul. We proceed now to the

Fourth general head, and shall endeavour to shew how the death of our relations and kindred in the flesh shall turn to our benefit.

I. It shews us the emptiness and insufficiency of our dearest created comforts, of all blessings that are not immortal.

We have lost, perhaps, an inferior relation, a son, a daughter, a nephew, a pleasing entertainment and comfort of life: But

death tells us, it was a poor dying comfort, a pretty piece of brittle clay, broken and dissolved, and mouldering to the dust. Our love and our grief, it may be, join together, to recal the past days of fondness and delight, short-lived delight, and empty vain fondness, that ends in tears and long mourning? We have lost a superior relation, or perhaps, an equal, a father, a wife, a husband, or a brother: We have lost a guide, a support, a helper, a dear affectionate friend, entirely loving and entirely beloved.

He was a kind and skilful guide, but death teaches us the insufficiency of his guidance, who left us in the mid-way, and lets us travel through all the remaining part of this dark wilderness alone. He has given us sweet counsel and direction in days past, but he can now direct us no more, we can consult him no more: Those lips of advice, on which we hung, are closed and silent in death: That voice will be heard no more: We must walk without this counsellor all the rest of our way, be it never so long, and never so dangerous.

He was our helper, and our support under daily difficulties; but it was a weak support, that could not stand itself, when death shook him: A poor helper, and a sorry defence, that could not resist the powers of disease and mortality, nor defend himself from the assaults of death.

He was a friend, and a faithful one too; but it was a feeble, a failing friend, even in the midst of his love and faithfulness; for he was called away, and constrained to depart from us in a dark and sorrowful minute, and hath left us to mourn alone.—He could not abide with us a moment beyond his summons; he forsook us while we were drowned in grief, and could give us no more consolation. *Our fathers where are they? Our prophets*, our instructors, our guides, and helpers are gone down to the land of silence, they lie asleep in the dust and darkness; *Zech.* i. 5.

Thus death is made of advantage to us, even when it strikes us in so tender a part: For it teaches us this sacred lesson, how vain and empty are all our hopes in creatures! The dart of death is like a pen of iron in his hand, and he writes emptiness and vanity on every friend, on every relative that he takes from our family, from our side, from our bosom: He writes it in deep and painful characters, and holds our souls to the solemn lesson. The same truth stands written in many a part of the book of God, in divine and golden letters; but perhaps, we would never have learned it, had not death copied it out for us in letters of blood.

II. The death of our kindred drives us to a more immediate and constant dependance on God. When the stream is cut

off, what should we do but run to the fountain? If the stars vanish, we seek the sun-beams. And O may the sun arise, and shine upon our souls with growing light and comfort as the stars disappear!

While our friends or kindred were alive, we made them our refuge in every distress; we have trusted in them perhaps too much; we have lived too much upon them, with the neglect of God. A parent, a brother, or perhaps a dearer relative; these were our high tower, our defence, our sun, and our shield: These assumed that station in our hearts, and that high place in our esteem, which is due to God only. But, when this tower is battered down to dust, when the shield of clay is broken to pieces, and this dim and feeble sun turned into darkness, then we make God alone our sun, our shield, and our high tower of defence. Then we search out earnestly, what kind and condescending characters, and relations God has assumed in his word; and we read and survey the gracious titles of our Lord Jesus Christ, with new and unknown delight.

Have any of you lost your earthly parents? Then you read with pleasure those words of the Psalmist, *If my father or my mother forsake me*, as they must do at the hour of death, then the Lord will take me up; Ps. xxvii. 10. And you rejoice in that glorious promise, *Be ye separate from idols*, saith the Lord; that is, separate yourselves from the sinful practices of the world, *and I will receive you, and I will be a Father to you, and ye shall be my sons and my daughters, saith the Lord Almighty*; 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18. Has death entered into a family, and taken the head, the husband away? The words of Isaiah grow sweeter than ever; Is. liv. 5. *Thy Maker is thy Husband, the Lord of Hosts is his name, even the God of the whole earth.* Are the widows and the fatherless children in danger of oppression, because they have lost their defender? They run to the lxviii. Ps. and live upon the 5th verse of it; *A Father of the fatherless, and a Judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation.* Is a brother summoned away by the stroke of death? But the Lord Jesus is alive still: He that took flesh and blood upon him, that he might be made like the rest of the children of God, *He is not ashamed to call them brethren*; Heb. ii. 11. This is a *brother* that was *born for* the day of *our adversity*; this is the *friend that sticks closer than a brother*, and abides with us when a brother departs, according to the expression of the wise man; Prov. xvii. 17. and xviii. 24. Thus the names, and characters, and relations of God the Father, and of our Lord Jesus Christ, acquire a new sweetness, and appear with greater love and glory in them, at the death of our earthly relatives.

There is many a christian can speak feelingly, and say,

"Never did I live so much upon my God, I never knew nor loved my Saviour so well, never conversed so much with his word, never did I find such sweetness in his names, nor his promises, nor such pleasure in secret converse with him, as I have done since the day I lost such a friend, or such a dear relation by the stroke of death: I have learned now to put no trust in creatures; *for their breath goeth forth, and that very day their thoughts of kindness perish;* Ps. cxlvi. 3—8. *Now refuge fails me, no man* seems to be *concerned for me,* since the death of such a friend; *I say,* therefore, *to my God, thou art my refuge;* Ps. cxlii. 4, 5.

III. The death of our dearest friends calls us to a noble trial of our love to God, and our submission to his sovereignty. Human nature indeed is afraid of trials; but when the present aids of divine grace give us the victory, then *blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him;* James i. 12. And upon this account, he exhorts christians in the second *verse,* to a very sublime and difficult practice, *My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations, knowing this, that the trial of your faith worketh patience,* and if it endures the trial, *it will be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ;* 1 Pet. i. 7.

When God sends his messenger of death, and takes a dear and beloved creature from our arms, or our bosom, the divine question is like that of our Lord to Peter, *Simon, lovest thou me?* John xxi. 15—17. Christian, *lovest thou me more than* thou lovest this creature? Art thou willing to resign this comfort at my call? Hast thou not given thyself to me, and does thy heart refuse to give up thy son, thy brother, or thy dearest friend? Hast thou not called me thy sovereign? I am come now to enquire into thy sincerity. Dost thou resign thy most beloved objects to my disposal? I gave up my Son to death for you; and have you any thing so dear to you as my Son was to me? What says your heart in answer to these solemn questions? Do you love me above all things, or no? Is your will bowed down to my foot? Can you now repeat from your very souls the same language, in which you have often addressed me in your closets, and in my sanctuary, "I am thine, Lord, I am thine; all that I have is thine?" Or do you murmur and quarrel at my providence, when I send my servant death to your house, to try whether these professions of yours were sincere or no?

Happy the christian that comes off with honour in this hour of trial, and who can say heartily, Lord, I resign what thou demandest, and am angry with myself that I should find so much reluctance in my heart, to surrender any thing at the call of God!

What a shining evidence of our sincerity is obtained at such a season? What a noble proof of our supreme love to God? And it shall be recorded in heaven for our honour, and produced in the day of the Lord Jesus?

There is nothing in all the history of Abraham, the father of the faithful, that gives him a more shining character on earth, or, perhaps, in heaven, than that he gave up his son Isaac, at the command of God, and *took the wood, and the fire, and the knife, in his hand*, and devoted his beloved, his only son to death; though it was in a way so terribly painful and so shocking to nature, that he himself must be the executioner. He had offered the precious sacrifice already in his heart, when the angel of the Lord came down and stopped his hand: Now I know that thou fearest God, and I know that thou lovest him too, seing thou hast not withheld thy son, thy only son from me; Gen xxii. 9—12.

Thus the death of the dearest relation turns greatly to our advantage, when it gives us so bright an evidence of our own graces, and assures us that we are hearty lovers of God.

IV. The death of a beloved relative, has often wrought for the good of a saint, when the long and painful sorrow which has attended it, has shewn us how dangerous a thing it was to love a creature too well.

"O! What a wound do I feel at my heart, says a christian, since the death of so near a relation: It pains me all the day: It fills my eyes with tears, and forbids my rest in the night: I am so troubled that I cannot sleep: It unfits me for the present duties of life, and hangs too heavy upon me, in the midst of the duties of religion. Surely, that creature dwelt too near my heart, and was joined in too close a union, since my heart bleeds and smarts so long after the parting stroke. Let me watch my affections for time to come, and set a guard upon my love, that it never, never tie my soul so fast to a creature again. Come down, blessed Saviour, and take faster hold of my heart; let thy own hand heal the wound that death has made, and let thy mercy pardon the guilt of my excessive creature-love: Dwell thou in my soul, my Lord and my God, and fill up all the unhappy and painful vacancy: Keep my affections for ever true to thee, and let my love to thee be supreme and unrivalled; nor let the softer passions of my nature wander and lose themselves amongst creatures again, lest they contract new guilt: lest they provoke thee to repeat the same smarting tragedy, and to renew these scenes of mourning."

V. The death of our kindred is for our advantage, when it awakens us to review our own conduct toward them, whether we

have behaved aright or no, and when it quickens our duty to surviving relatives.

While they are alive, and present with us, our neglect of duty towards them does not so soon strike our consciences; but when the stroke of death divides them from us in this world for ever, we are ready then to bethink ourselves, whether our carriage toward them has been just and kind: And if our enquiry finds out our guilt, our hearts are tender at that season, and we soon yield to the conviction. "Did I pay that duty to a father, which he well deserved, and which God required? Did I treat a mother with that filial affection, and submissive tenderness that became a child? Did I pay that just deference and honour to the counsels and advice of my parents as I should have done? Did I treat my sisters with that decent affection and respect that became me? And did I exercise brotherly love toward all my equal relatives? Or has my conduct been undutiful, unkind, and unbecoming?

And especially if we have this to charge ourselves with, that we took no care for the welfare of the souls of those that are dead. Such thoughts as these will hang heavy about the heart, and press hard upon the conscience in that day. "Did I not see my child or my brother walk in the ways of sin: and yet did I ever give him a hint of his dreadful danger? Did I fear that he was a stranger to the grace of God, and yet did I not neglect to invite him to receive the gospel? Had I not reason to question whether he was a sincere convert or no? But how little have I done toward his conversion?

"Or if he was ever concerned about the affairs of his soul, and awakened and thoughtful about death and hell, did I direct him in the way of peace? Did I endeavour to lead him to Jesus the Saviour? Or did I let him go on without instruction, and without comfort, till death laid its cold hands upon him, and he plunged into the eternal world at a mournful uncertainty? O my heart! my heart! The anguish of it pains me beyond what I am able to bear. O that I could recal my brother, or my son from the grave! How would I follow him with counsels and intreaties? And neither give him nor myself any rest, till I had good hope, through grace, that he had fled for refuge to lay hold on Christ and his salvation. I would never be at ease, nor would I cease pleading for him at the throne of grace, till I had found some evidences of a new nature in him, and a change of heart from sin to repentance and holiness.

"Or suppose my departed relative was a true christian, what did I do toward the increase of his faith? Did I ever allure him to holy conversation? Did I take occasion now and then to introduce religious discourse? Did I converse with him

ever about the matters of our common salvation, that as iron sharpens iron, so we might have quickened each others zeal and love, and helped each other onward in our way to heaven?

"Surely I have found myself too guilty, in some of these instances. Forgive my criminal negligence, O my God, and through thy grace, I will apply myself to double diligence, with regard to my relatives that yet survive: I will enquire, as far as it is proper, into the state of their souls: I will seek the most powerful and the kindest methods, to awaken the thoughtless sinners amongst them; and I will study, and pray, and ask God what I shall say to make a deep impression upon their hearts: And though I have no office in the church, yet what I have learned there, I will talk over at home: I will preach Christ crucified, and all his gospel to them, as God shall give me proper opportunity. I will converse more freely with my pious kindred about the things of God, and learn their inward sentiments of religion and experimental godliness. Thus will I bring holy discourse into the parlour and the chamber; and every soul in my house shall be a witness of my endeavours to promote the eternal welfare of those that are near me."

Now when the death of a near relation attains such an end as this, and raises our repentance and holy zeal at this rate, we cannot doubt but that we receive sensible advantage by it.

VI. The death of our friends, who were truly religious, inclines us to review their instructions and their virtues, and sets them before our eyes, in a fresh and lively manner, to influence our own practice.

We are too ready to forget their advice, while they are living and daily present with us, and we take too little notice of those virtues, in which they were eminent. We beheld their humility toward God and men, their condescension to their inferiors, their love and hearty friendship toward their equals, and their sweetness of temper toward all around them. We beheld it, and perhaps we loved and honoured them for it; but we took but little pains to copy after them. We saw their pity to the poor and the miserable, their charity to persons of different sects and sentiments in religion; their readiness to forgive those that offended them, and their good-will and obliging carriage to all men. There was a beauty and loveliness in this conduct, that rendered them amiable indeed, but how little have we transcribed of their example, either into our hearts or our lives? We observed their constant tenderness of conscience, their devotion toward God, and their zeal for the honour of Christ, and his gospel in the world. O that we had made these graces the matter of our imitation! What can we do now more to honour their memory, than to speak, and live, and act like them?

It may be we have got their pictures drawn by some skilful hand, and their images hang round us in their best likeness, as tender memorials of what we once enjoyed, to give us now and then a melancholy delight, and awaken in us the pleasing sadness of love. These we call our most precious pieces of furniture, and our hearts rate them at an uncommon price. But it would be much richer furniture for our souls, to have the best likeness of our pious predecessors and kindred copied out there. Let us now and then reflect what were their peculiar virtues, and the remarkable graces that adorned them; and if we could imagine the spirit of each of them to look down upon us, through those eyes which the pencil has so well imitated, and to speak through those lips, each of them would say, in the language of the softest and most sacred affection; *Be ye followers of me as dear children*, so far *as I was a follower of Christ*.

And this thought I would more especially impress on those who were most unhappily negligent of the pious counsel of their ancestors, or ran counter to their holy advice and example in their life-time. "I was too regardless, may a young christian say, of the wise and weighty sayings of my father deceased, they return now upon my thoughts, with a fresh and living influence. I have been too ready to neglect what a kind mother taught me; but the instructions that I received from her dying lips, had such an air of solemnity and tenderness in them, that they have made a deep impression upon my heart; and I hope I shall never forget them. The prudent and pious rules that my elder relations have often set before me, recur to my thoughts with double efficacy since their death: I shall hear them speak no more, I shall see their holy examples no more: I will gather up the fragments of their religious counsels, and make them the rule of my conduct: I am well assured their souls are happy, and by the grace of God I will tread in their steps, till I arrive at those blessed regions, where I hope to meet them."

This thought leads me on to the last instance of benefit which we derive from the death of our kindred in the flesh.

VII. The death of dear and near relations calls our thoughts in a more powerful and sensible manner, to converse with the grave and eternity.

When our neighbours, or our common acquaintance die, we attend the funeral, and cast an eye into the grave; we spend a thought or two on the pit of corruption, and the mouldering dust: We awaken a meditation or two on things heavenly and the world to come: and we return quickly, and busily to this world again: But when God sends death into our chambers, and it makes a slaughter there, it awakens us more effectually from a drowsy frame, and it nails our thoughts down to our most important and

everlasting concerns. "Part of me is gone to the dust already, it is not long ere the surviving part shall go also. Death has smitten the desire of my eyes, and the partner of my joys, it will strike me ere long, and am I ready?" This thought dwells upon the heart of a true christian at such a season, and while the Spirit of God assists the work, it is not in the power of all the trifles in this earth to banish the holy thought, and carnalize the mind again. As when a man is seized with the dead palsy, or has a limb cut off, and buried in the dust, how sensibly does this awaken in him the thought of death and futurity? "The sentence of death is begun to be executed on me already, and the whole execution will be quickly fulfilled; it is time now to be ready, for death is in good earnest, and has begun his work."

And if our departed relative were a christian indeed, and gave us comfortable hope in his death, then it leads our thoughts naturally to heaven, and most powerfully touches the springs of our heavenly hopes. It raises our pious wishes to the upper world and we say, as Thomas did at the death of Lazarus, *Let us go, that we may die with him;* John xi. 16. Let us go to our God and our holy kindred, and enjoy their better presence there. Let us not *sorrow for the dead, as those that mourn without hope*; 1 Thess. iv. 13. but look upward to things unseen, and forward to the great rising-day, and rejoice in the promised and future glories that are beyond life and time."

Every dear relative that dies and leaves us, gives us one motive more to be willing to die: Their death furnishes us with one new allurement toward heaven, and breaks off one of the fetters and bonds that tied us down to this earth. Alas! we are tied too fast to these earthly tabernacles, these prisons of flesh and blood. We are attached too much to flesh and blood still, though we find them such painful and such sinful companions. We love to tarry in this world too well, though we meet with so many weaning strokes to divide our hearts from it. O it is good to live more at a loose from earth, that we may be ready for the parting hour: Let us not be angry with the sovereign hand of God that breaks one bond after another; though the strokes be painful, yet they loosen our spirits from this cottage of clay, they teach us to practise a flight heaven-ward in holy meditations and devout breathings; and we learn to say, *How long, O Lord, how long?*

The Recollection.—"Have any of us lately felt such parting strokes as these? Have we lost any of our beloved kindred? God calls upon us now, and enquires, "What have you learned of these divine lessons?" I would ask myself this day, Have I seen the emptiness and the insufficiency of creatures, and recalled my hope and confidence from every thing beneath and beside God?

Have I past through this solemn hour of trial well, and shewn my supreme love to God, and my most entire submission to his sovereignty, by resigning so dear a comfort at his demand? Have I been taught by the inward pain which I felt at parting, and by the smart which still remains, how dangerous a thing it is to love a creature too well? Have I duly considered my past conduct toward my relations deceased, and does it improve itself to my conscience at the review? Or have I found matter for self-condemnation and repentance? Have I treasured up the memory of their virtues in my heart, and set them before me as the copy of my life? Have my thoughts followed the soul of my dear departed friend, and traced it with pleasure to the world of blessed spirits; and does my own soul seem to fix its hope and joy there, and to dwell there above? Are my thoughts become more spiritual and heavenly? Do I live more as a borderer on the other world, since a piece of me is gone thither? And am I ready for the summons, if it should come before to-morrow?

"Happy christian, who has been taught by the Spirit of grace to improve the death even of the dearest relative to so divine an advantage! The words of my text are then fulfilled experimentally in you: *Death is yours:* Death itself is made a part of your treasures. The parting stroke is painful indeed, but it carries a blessing in it too; for it has promoted your heavenly and eternal interest." *Amen.*

HYMN FOR SERMON XLII.

Death of Kindred improved.

MUST friends and kindred drop and die?
Must helpers be withdrawn?
While sorrow, with a weeping eye,
Counts up our comforts gone.

Be thou our comfort, mighty God,
Our helper and our friend:
Nor leave us, in this dang'rous road,
Till all our trials end.

O may our feet pursue the way,
Our pious fathers led?
While love and holy zeal obey
The counsels of the dead.

Let us be wean'd from all below;
Let hope our grief dispel;
Death will invite our souls to go,
Where our best kindred dwell.

SERMON XLIII.

Death a Blessing to the Saints.

1 Cor. iii. 22.—Whether life or death,—all are yours.

WE have already seen many divine comforts, and a rich variety of blessings derived from the formidable name of DEATH: One would scarce have thought that a word of so much terror should have ever been capable of yielding so much sweetness; but the gospel of Christ is a spring of wonders: It has consecrated all the terrible things in nature, even death itself, and every thing beside sin, to the benefit of the saint.

Death, in all its appearances, may furnish the mind of a believer with some sacred lesson of truth or holiness. When it appears in the extent of its dominion, and bringing all mankind down to the dust; when it lays hold on an impenitent sinner, and fills his flesh and soul with agonies; when it assaults a saint, and is conquered by faith; when it makes a wide ravage among our acquaintance, when it enters into our families, and takes away our near and dear relatives from the midst of us, still the christian may reap some divine advantage by it.

But can our own death be ever turned into a blessing too? Nature thinks it hard to learn such a strange lesson as this, and has much ado to be persuaded to believe it. How dismal are its attendants to flesh and blood! What languishings of the body! What painful agonies! What tremblings and convulsions in nature frequently attend the dying hour even of the best of christians! Can that be a blessing which turns this active and beautiful engine of the body into loathsome clay; which closes these eyes in long darkness, and deprives us of every sense? Can death become a blessing to us, which cuts us off from all converse with the sun and moon, and that rich variety of sensible objects which furnish out such delightful scenes all around us, and entertain the whole animal creation? Can that be a blessing which divides asunder those two intimate friends, the *flesh and the spirit*, that sends one of them to the noisome prison of the grave, and hurries away the other into unknown regions? Yes, the gospel of Christ has power and grace enough in it to take off all these gloomy appearances from death, and to illuminate the darkest side of it

with various lustre. So the sun paints the fairest colours upon the blackest cloud, and while the thick dark shower is descending it entertains our eyes with all the beauties of the rain-bow; a most glorious type and seal of the covenant of grace, that can give a pleasing aspect to death itself, and spread light and pleasure over the darksome grave.

If we are believers in Christ, *death* is ours as well as *life*. These two contrary states may each of them derive peculiar benefits from the new covenant. The christian may be taught so to value and improve life, that he may be not only patient, but chearful and thankful in the continuance of it. This has been made evident in a large discourse already: And yet it must be confessed, that the advantages which death brings to a believer are still greater and more glorious, and this will appear in the following particulars:

I. Death finishes our state of labour and trial, and puts us in possession of the crown and the prize. St. Paul was appointed to die by the sword of Nero, and to end his labours and his race in blood; yet he rejoices to think that his race was just at an end, and triumphs in view of the glorious recompence; 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8. *I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness.* There is a voice from heaven that proclaims the dead happy; upon this account, that their toil and fatigue is come to an end. Rev. xiv. 13. *Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, for they rest from their labours, and their works follow them;* that is, the prize of everlasting happiness which Christ has promised to his labouring saints. Rev. ii. 10. *Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.* So the weary traveller counts the last hour of the day the best; for it finishes the fatigue and toil of the day, and brings him to his resting-place. So the soldier rejoices in the last field of battle; he fights with the prize of glory in his eye, and ends the war with courage, pleasure, and victory.

II. Death frees us for ever from all our errors and mistakes, and brings us into a world of glorious knowledge and illumination. The vale of death is a dark passage indeed, but it leads into the regions of perfect light. *Now we know but in part*, says the apostle; 1 Cor. xiii. 12. *Now we see but through a glass darkly, then we shall see God and our Saviour face to face, and know them even as we are known*; not in the same degree of perfection indeed, but according to our measure and capacity, we shall know them, in a way of vision, or immediate sight, as God knows his creatures, as one man knows his friend, whose face he beholds with his eyes; or as one spirit knows another, by some unknown ways of perception which belong to spirits.

O what a new and unspeakable pleasure will it be to the disciples of Christ, and the ministers of the gospel, that have been tired and worn out in tedious controversies in this world, and sorely perplexed amongst the difficult passages of scripture, when they shall arrive at that region of light and glory, where the darknesses of the mind shall be all scattered, the veil shall be taken off from sacred things, and doubts and difficulties shall vanish for ever!

Alas! What desolation and mischief has the noise and clamour of controversy brought on the church of Christ in all ages! What quarrels and sharp contests has it raised among fellow-christians, and especially, where zeal and ignorance have joined together, and brought fire and darkness into the sanctuary! This has banished charity and love out of the house of God, and made the Spirit of God himself to depart grieved. Surely death carries a considerable blessing in it, as it delivers us from these disorders, these bitter quarrels, and appoints us a place in the temple of God on high, where the axe and the hammer never sound, where the saw of contention is never drawn, where the noise of war is heard no more, but perfect light lays a foundation for perfect and everlasting love.

III. Death makes an utter end of sin, it delivers us from a state of temptation, and conveys us into a state of perfect holiness, safety, and peace. *The spirits of the just are made perfect* in holiness, when they leave this sinful and mortal flesh, they stand without spot or blemish, without fault or infirmity of greater or lesser size, and appear pure and undefiled before the throne of God; Rev. xiv. 5. *Their robes are washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb, and they serve him without sin, day and night, in his temple*; Rev. vii. 14, 15. When death carries them away from this world, it carries them out of the territories of the devil; for he has no power in that land whither happy souls go: And all the remaining lusts of the flesh, that had their death's wound given them by renewing grace, are now destroyed for ever; for the death of the body is the final death of sin, and the grave is, as it were, the burying-place of many unruly iniquities, that have too often defiled and disquieted the spirit.

And as the corrupt affections which are mingled with our flesh and blood, and which are rooted deep in animal nature, are left behind us in the bed of death, so when we ascend to heaven, we shall find no manner of temptation to revive them. There is no malice or angry resentment to be awakened there, no incitements to envy, intemperance, or the cursed sin of pride, that cleaves so close to our natures here on earth. When we are encompassed with those blessed creatures, angels and saints made

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death has conveyed them into the presence of their heavenly Father, they shall forsake his law no more; there are no more transgressions for the rod to correct, the stripes of chastisement cease for ever; and their Father, and their God, shall be angry no more.

The best part of the promises are fulfilled when a soul arrives at heaven. The promise of the resurrection of the body yet remains unaccomplished indeed; but every separate spirit in heaven waits for it with full assurance of accomplishment. "I have found," says the holy soul, "so many rich promises of the covenant fulfilled already, and I am in the possession of so many divine blessings that God once foretold, that I am well assured that my God is faithful who has promised, and the rest shall be all fulfilled."

V. Death raises us above the mean and trifling pleasures of the present state, as well as delivers us from all present pains, and brings us into a world of perfect ease, and superior and refined delight. It divides us from the pains and pleasures, that we derive from the first Adam, and sets us in the midst of superior blessings, which the second Adam has purchased for us. *We shall hunger no more, we shall thirst no more, neither shall the scorching heat of the sun light upon us*, or any painful influence from the elements of this world: *The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed us with celestial food*, suited to our purified natures, and lead us to drink full draughts of unknown pleasure, which is described by living fountains of water. We shall see God himself, the original beauty, and the spring of all delight: We shall see our Lord Jesus Christ, the most illustrious copy of the Father, *the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and God himself shall wipe away all tears from our eyes*; Rev. vii. 16, 17. *Though the wages of sin is death* by the appointment of the law of God; Rom. vi. 23. yet this very death is constrained to serve the purposes of our great Redeemer; and it brings us into the possession of that *eternal life*, which is the *gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord*.

VI. Death not only gives us possession of promised blessings, but it banishes all our fears and doubts for ever, by fixing us in a state of happiness unchangeable. They that are once entered into the temple of God on high *shall no more go out* of it; Rev. iii. 12. For they are established in the house of God, they are as pillars there, they become a part of that vast and living temple, in which God dwells for ever in all his glory.

Death is ours; for it finishes our fears, it fulfils our wishes and our hopes, and leaves us no more room to fear to all eternity. When we behold the face of God in righteousness, and awake

VII. Death is a happ
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Thus have I shewn in various instances, how the death of a believer in general is appointed to work for his good, and becomes an advantage to him through the grace of Christ. I proceed to shew how the death of a christian in all the particular circumstances that attend it, has something in it that may be turned to his benefit.

Christ has the keys of death and the grave; he was dead, and is alive, and behold he lives for evermore; Rev. i. 18. And he knows how to manage all the circumstances of the death of his saints for their profit: He appoints the time when, the manner how, and the place where they shall die, and determines all these things by rules of unsearchable wisdom, under the influence of his faithfulness and his love.

1. The time when we shall die is appointed by Christ: If he calls us away in the days of our youth, he secures us thereby from many a temptation, and many a sin; for our life on earth is subject to daily defilements. He prevents also many a sorrow and distress of mind, many an agony and sharp pain to which our flesh is subject, and saves us from all the languishing weaknesses of old age, and from tasting the dregs of mortality.

When our blessed Lord foresees some huge and heavy sorrows ready to fall upon us, or some mighty temptations approaching towards us, he lays his hand upon us in the midst of life, and hides us in the grave. This has been the sweet hiding place of many a saint of God, from a day of public temptation and overspreading misery.

If he lengthens out our life to many years, we have a fair opportunity of doing much more service for our God, and our Redeemer; and we also enjoy the longer experience of his power, his wisdom, and his faithful mercy, in guiding us through many a dark difficulty, in supporting us under many a heavy burden, and delivering our souls from many a threatening temptation. Oftentimes he sweetens the passage of his aged saints through the dark valley, with nearer and brighter views of the heavenly world: He gives them a strong and earnest expectation of glory, and some sweet foretaste of it, to bear them up under the langours of old age and sickness: The haven of rest becomes sweeter to them, when they have passed through many tedious storms: The hour of release into the world of light, is more exquisitely pleasing, after a tedious imprisonment in the flesh, and long years of darkness.

2. The manner, how we shall die, is appointed also by Christ our Lord, for the benefit of his saints. If death smite us with a sudden and unexpected stroke, then we are surprized into the world of pleasure at once, and, ere we are aware, our

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variety of the deaths of his saints; and this shall make part of our songs in the upper world, and give a joyful accent to our hallelujahs there.

Let us maintain therefore, a blessed assurance of the wise and gracious designs of our Lord, in all the circumstances of the death of his people. Let us learn to say with that aged saint, and eminent servant of Christ, the Reverend Mr. Baxter, when under many weaknesses of nature, and long and sore agonies of pain, he spake concerning his death, "Lord, when thou wilt, what thou wilt, how thou wilt." Let us insure our souls in his hands for eternity, and not be over-solicitous about the circumstances of our death, about the place, the manner, or the hour when we shall take our leave of life and time.

[If this sermon be too long, it may be divided here.]

Having made it appear, in these several sermons, that death is ours, or shall turn to our advantage, not only when it strikes our friends or strangers, but when it seizes our own flesh also: I desire to conclude this subject of discourse with various inferences, of which some may be called doctrinal, and others practical.

The doctrinal inferences are these:

Inference I. How different is the judgment of sense, from the judgment of faith? The eye of sense looks upon death as a sovereign and cruel tyrant, reigning over all nature and nations, and making dreadful havoc among mankind, as it were, after his own will and pleasure; but faith beholds it as a slave subdued to the power of Christ, and constrained to act under his sovereign influence for the good of all his saints. Sense teaches us to look upon ourselves, as the possession and food of death; but faith assures us, that death is our possession, and a part of our treasure. Death is yours, O christians, for *all things are yours.*

When sense has the ascendant over us, we take death to be a dark and dismal hour; but in the speech and spirit of faith, we call it a bright and glorious one. Sense esteems it to be the sorest of all afflictions, but faith numbers it among the sweetest of our blessings, because it delivers us from a thousand sins and sorrows.

It has been reported, that Socrates called "death a birthday into eternal life." A most glorious thought, and a very inviting name! But it is strange, that a heathen philosopher should ever hit upon it, it is so much like the dialect of the gospel, and the language of faith. He had learned to talk more nobly than the sensual world, though he was not favoured with the light of the gospel. It is so much the more shameful for

christians, to talk and live below the character of this philosopher.

O when shall we get above this life of sense? When shall we rise in our ideas and our judgment of things? When shall we attain to the upper regions of christianity, and breathe in a purer air, and see all things in a brighter and better light? When shall we live the life of faith, and learn its divine language? Death is like a thick dark veil, as it appears to the eye of sense; when shall our faith remove the veil, and see the light, the immortality, the glory that lies beyond it? Death, like the river Jordan, seems to overflow its banks, when we approach it, and divides and affrights us from the heavenly Canaan: When shall we climb to the top of Pisgah, that we may look beyond the swelling waves of this Jordan, and take a fair and inviting prospect of the promised land.

II. How glorious and how dreadful is the difference, between the death of a saint and that of a sinner, a soul that is in Christ, and a soul that has no interest in him! The death of every sinner has all that real evil and terror in it, in which it appears to an eye of sense; but a convinced sinner beholds it yet a thousand times more dreadful. When conscience is awakened upon the borders of the grave, it beholds death in its utmost horror, as the curse of the broken law, as the accomplishment of the threatenings of an angry God. A guilty conscience looks on death with all its formidable attendants round it, and espies an endless train of sorrows coming after it. Such a wretch beholds death riding towards him on a pale horse, and hell following at his heels, without all relief or remedy, without a Saviour, and without hope.

But a true christian, when he reads the name of death among the curses of the law, knows that Christ his Saviour and his Surety, has sustained it in that dreadful sense, and put an end to its power and terror. He reads its name now in the promises of the gospel, and calls it a glorious blessing, a release from sin and sorrow, an entrance into everlasting joy. The saint may lie calm and peaceable in the midst of all the attendants of death; like Daniel in the den of lions, for it cannot hurt or destroy him: But when a sinner is thrown to this devourer, it does as it were break all his bones, it tears both his flesh and his spirit as its proper prey; *Death feeds upon him*, as the scripture expresses it: *Ps.* xlix. 14. and fills his conscience with immortal anguish. Who can bear the thought of dying in such a state under the dominion of death, without Christ, and without hope.

III. How much does the religion of the New Testament transcend all other religions, both that of the light of nature,

and all the former revelations of grace; for it better instructs us how to die. The religion of the ancient patriarchs, the religion of Moses and the Jews, as well as the religion of the philosophers, all come vastly short of christianity, in the important business of dying.

The philosopher, by the labours of his reason, and by a certain hardiness of spirit, persuades himself not to tremble at the thoughts of death; for it may be, there is no hereafter; or if there be, he would fain hope for an happy one: And thus he ventures into death, with some sort of courage and composure of mind, like a bold man, that is taking an immense leap, in the dark, out of one world into another: but he can never know certainly, that there are no terrible things to meet him in that unseen state.

The religion of the Jews and patriarchs, which God himself revealed to men, enabled many of them to resign their lives with patience and hope, and to walk through the valley of death without much dismay, when the appointed hour was come. A few of them I confess, have been elevated by a noble faith above the level of that dispensation: Yet some of them seem to make bitter mourning, because of the shadows of darkness that covered the grave, and all the regions beyond it. *They were all their life-time subject to bondage through the fear of death;* Heb. ii. 14.

It is our Jesus alone, who has *brought life and immortality into so glorious a light by the gospel;* 2 Tim. i. 10. He dwelt long in heaven before he came into our world, and again he went as a fore-runner into those unseen worlds, and came back again and taught his disciples, what heaven is: And thus we learn to overcome death with all its terrors, by the richer prospect, which he has given us, of the heavenly country that lies beyond the grave: He has taught his followers to rejoice in dying, and to possess the pleasures that are to be derived from death, as it is an entrance into the regions of light and joy. Blessed be God! that we were born in the days of the Messiah, since Christ returned from the dead, and that we were not sent either to the schools of the philosophers, or even to Moses, to teach us how to die.

IV. Learn from these discourses, what a sweet and delightful glory belongs to the covenant of grace, that turns a curse into a blessing. When the broken law, or covenant of works attempts to curse thee with death, O believer, (as Balaam did Israel) *the Lord thy God turns the curse into a blessing to thee by this new covenant, because the Lord thy God loveth thee;* Deut. xxiii. 5. So afflictions are turned into mercies by the virtue of this covenant, they mortify our sins, they wean us from the

world, they bring our hearts near to God, they make us partakers of his holiness. So death, which is the greatest affliction to nature, and has such a formidable aspect to a sensual man, is made subservient to the eternal welfare of a christian. It is this sweet covenant that has wrought the change; Christ has conquered it, and the believer enjoys the triumph.

Does the eye of nature behold death as a serpent? Our Lord Jesus has broken its teeth, and taken away its sting; for by his sacrifice he has abolished sin, which is the sting of death. Does nature look upon death as a lion? Our Redeemer has slain it, and the covenant of grace has furnished the carcase of it with honey, and stored it with delicious food for the entertainment of a christian; thus, *Out of the eater cometh forth meat, and out of of the strong cometh forth sweetness*; Judges xiv. 14. The riddle of Samson, when applied in this manner, carries a diviner beauty in it, and more exquisite delight. And as that Jewish champion feasted his father and his mother, with delicacies taken out of the lion he had slain, so does our Lord feast his brethren and his friends, with sacred pleasures derived from death, our vanquished enemy.

O how unspeakable is the privilege of those that belong to Christ! If you are his, then death is yours: Christ is the only begotten Son, and he inherits all things; not only as a son but as the first overcomer: *Ye all are sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus*; Gal. iii. 26. *Ye shall also be overcomers, and shall inherit all things*; Rev. xxi. 7. *Whether life or death, things present or things to come, all are yours, for ye are Christ's.* I proceed to the practical uses.

I. If death in every sense, may be turned to the advantage of the saints, as I have proved in the former discourse, let us see then, that, in all its appearances, we gain some advantage by it. Let us not act like fools, who have a prize put into their hands, and know not how so use it.

If our fellow-creatures die and go down to the dust, and the nations of mankind perish from the earth, let us learn thereby the frailty of our natures; let us learn so to *number our days as to apply our hearts to wisdom*; Ps. xc. 12. and be awakened to an active and immediate preparation for the day of our own death. If we see impenitent sinners dying under the anguish of a guilty conscience, let us gain a sensible lesson of the dreadful evil of sin; let it raise such a religious fear of the wrath of God, and such a sacred gratitude for our deliverance, from the torments of hell, as may quicken every grace into its warmest exercise, and its brightest evidence. If death seize upon our Lord Christ himself, his dying groans lay a foundation for our immortal hopes: Let us meditate on the thousand blessings we receive

from his cross and his tomb. Do the saints around us lie down and die? We should learn to follow them boldly into the dark valley, and to fall asleep in the dust with the same chearful hopes of the joyful rising-day. Does death come near us into our own family, and tear our dear relatives from our arms? Even this may be turned to our advantage too; it should render the world and the pleasures of it more insipid and worthless; it should loosen our heart-strings from the fond embraces of the creature; for it calls our eyes and our souls heavenward and home-ward, and that with a loud and sensible voice, if nature and grace are awake to hear it.

If death and the grave be ours, and we make no use of this privilege, we are like misers, who have treasure in their possessions but never employ it to any valuable purpose. Has Christ our Lord taken death among his captives, and made it his own property? Let us look upon ourselves as humble sharers in the victory; he has appointed it to serve the interest of all his followers: He has put it into the inventory of our treasures. Let us improve it then to these divine purposes, let us seize and enjoy the spoils *which Christ, the Captain of our salvation,* has taken from the hands of the prince of darkness.

II. Is death become your possession, O believers, through the grace of the covenant: Fear it not then, but ever look upon it with an eye of faith as a conquered adversary: Behold it, as reduced to your service; wait for it, with holy courage and pleasure; it is a messenger of mercy to your souls from Christ, who hath vanquished it in the open field of battle, and reduced it to his subjection. When you labour and groan under sins and temptations, under pains and sorrows, remember Christ has appointed death to be his officer for your relief. It is like the porter that opens the door of his repository, the grave, where your bodies shall take a sweet slumber till the resurrection-day; and it is appointed also to open the gates of heaven for your spirits and to let them into a world of unknown felicity.

Death has so many things belonging to it, which are afflictive to nature, and formidable to the eye of sense, that we have need of all manner of assistance to raise our souls above the fear of it. The very thought of dying makes many a christian shudder, and sweat, and tremble, and awakens all the springs of human infirmity: O may the grace of faith gain a more glorious ascendancy in our souls! We should often meditate on such doctrines as these, which place that dreadful thing death in the most easy and pleasing light; we should behold it as changed from a curse into a blessing, and numbered among our treasures. Christians should accustom themselves to look at it through the

glass of the gospel, which casts fair colours upon what is in itself so dark and formidable. It is the gospel in that glass which discovers to us the flowery blessings that grow in that gloomy valley, and gives a fair and delightful prospect of those hills of paradise and pleasure that lie beyond the grave. Why should we let this blessed gospel lie neglected, and live still in bondage to the fear of dying?

The Recollection.—"Come now, and let us learn by this discourse, to shame ourselves of these weaknesses, these unreasonable fears. Let us talk to our own souls in the language of faith. Why, O my soul, art thou afraid to let this body die? Hast thou not endured labours and trials enough, and art thou unwilling to come to the end of them? Hast thou not yet been tempted enough? Hast thou not been foiled too often, and too often thrown down in the conflict? Think of thy many wounds of conscience, the bruises of thy spirit, the defilement of thy garments, and the loss of thy purity and thy peace. Canst thou fear that all these should be repeated again and again? Art thou unwilling this war should have an end? Art thou afraid of victory and triumph? What dost thou labour and fight for? Dost thou not run to obtain the prize? Dost thou not wrestle and fight to gain the crown? And hast thou not courage enough to go across the dark valley, to take possession of this crown and this prize.

of the sunshine, and that perfect day that shall scatter all these clouds of doubt and mistake, and let thee see thy Saviour and thy God face to face, as they are seen by angels? O that surprizing hour, of unknown delight, that shall place thee, O my soul, in the midst of the world of spirits, surrounded with the light of heaven, and in the open presence of God, even thy God! When thou shalt gain swift and transporting acquaintance with the Almighty Being that made thee, and the Son of God, who dwelt once in mortal flesh, and died to save thee! When the divine irradiations of the Eternal Spirit shall unfold those mysteries to thy view, which had so much darkness about them in these lower regions! What an illustrious scene of light and joy shall arise all around thee as thou enterest into that unknown state! What strange new ideas of things, what new worlds of knowledge shall throng in upon thee, and thy enlarged understanding shall receive them all with infinite satisfaction, and with ever-growing pleasure! Art thou not already on the wing, my soul, at such a divine prospect as this? O stupid creatures that we are! we seek after the light of truth here below, and croud about a glimmering spark of knowledge, we wrangle all around it with endless contention, and yet when death would open the gate of glory, and admit us into regions of light, we start back, and retire, contented to abide among twilight and shadows.

"But, O my soul, if truth and knowledge are not sufficient, to allure thee, has holiness no constraining power? Hast thou not sinned enough and broken the laws of God often enough already? Hast thou not brought guilt enough, and grief enough, upon thyself, that thou art afraid of a state of perfect holiness? What is it that has given thee such inward pain as the perpetual workings of thy native iniquity? What is it that has made thee cry out, *O wretched creature that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* Rom. vii. 24. From the temptations and sins which are mingled with flesh and blood! And art thou afraid to have thy groans ended, thy complaints removed, and thy deliverance appear? Art thou unwilling to accept of the release? Dost thou shrink back from the sight of the deliverer? Hast not thy faith often seen the spirits of the just made perfect standing before the throne, rejoicing before God, worshipping in the complete beauty of holiness? And has not thy faith awakened thy desires and thy sacred wishes? O that I were in the midst of them! Why then art thou so unwilling to leave this body of sin and darkness, and to go out of this troublesome and impure prison into that glorious world, that blessed assembly, and to worship amongst them without imperfection, and without weariness? Consider, O my soul, are thy complaints

of indwelling corruption sincere? Are thy groans for deliverance honest and hearty? Why then art thou afraid to let this tabernacle be dissolved, and to gain a blessed release from these inbred and restless enemies? Has not the lustre of perfect holiness attraction and force enough in it, to awaken thy longings, and stretch thy wings for a flight to heaven.

"Remember also whilst thou art here, and art often sinning, many of the threatenings of God in his word stand bent against thee, his arrows sometimes stick in thy flesh, and pierce thy very soul. I confess these are not the sword of his vindictive justice, thy afflictions are but the corrections of his rod: But is it not better to dwell in that world where thou shalt feel no such correcting strokes, and deserve chastisement no more, where the Lord thy God shall lay aside every frown, and remove his anger for ever?

"Thy best life now is to live upon the promises; but does not all the excellency of a promise consist in the hope of performance? And is not the performance then so much better than the promise itself? Is not possession better than hope? Is not an assured and an unchangeable possession better than this state of doubts and fears? Is it not much more agreeable to *dwell in the house of God for ever*; Ps. xxiii. 6. than only to make a visit to it now and then? Is it not infinitely better to be fixed in a state of perfect felicity, without the least fear or apprehension of losing it? To be as a *pillar in the temple of God, thy God, and to go no more out*; Rev. iii. 13.

"Think again, Hast thou not sustained sufficient pains and sorrows both of flesh and mind in this lower world? Death shall put an end to them all; and art thou unwilling to have a full release from sorrow and pain? Has this flesh of thine been complained of so often as thy clog and thy painful prison, and art thou more afraid to have thy fetters knocked off? Has not thy body given thee smart and anguish enough? And has it not tempted thee enough away from thy God, and thy truest happiness? Has thy sinful sickly flesh been so charming a companion that thou art not yet willing to part with it? Dost thou not desire to have all thy diseases healed at once? Wouldst thou not be glad to have all thy torments of body and mind for ever eased, and all the uneasinesses of flesh and spirit removed for ever?

"It is true, the mere desire of ease should not be the chief reason why thou shouldest desire death, nor shouldest thou seek it with an impatient spirit: It is thy duty to bear sufferings and sorrows with holy patience, as a good soldier of Christ, it is thy duty to abide in thy post during his pleasure, to fill up the hours with service, and to sustain the fatigues and burdens of the mortal state to the glory of God thy Saviour: But he does not re-

quire that thou shouldest fall in love with a state of guilt and pain, a state that has so much sin and temptation, so much burden and fatigue in it; he gives thee leave to groan after the hour of release and deliverance. *In this tabernacle we groan earnestly, being burdened;* 2 Cor. v. 2.

"Consider further, O my soul, what is there in this world that should make thee fond of continuing among the inhabitants of it? Has not the world, thou dwellest in, sufficiently discovered itself to thee, as a land of mere vanity and vexation, and art thou fond of the tents of Meshech and Kedar, where thy soul has so little peace? Art thou afraid to change thy dwelling-place? Hast thou not been teased long enough with the company of sinners, or the foolish and unfriendly carriage of those who are imperfect saints? Hast thou not been often ready to say, *O that I had the wings of a dove, to fly away from the windy storm and tempest?* Ps. lv. 6, 7. to get afar off from the rage and malice of enemies, from the troublesome infirmities of friends, afar off from the peevishness, the envy and the passion of some of thy fellow-christians? How often hast thou wished even for a wilderness where thou mayest be at rest? Behold the door of death will shortly open itself to thee, and would let thee in, not to a wilderness, but to a paradise, to a place of eternal rest and freedom from all uneasy society; and yet thou delayest and hangest backward, and art afraid to go.

"In that upper world the saints have no follies about them, no vicious and fretful humours, no springs of vexation; they leave all their weaknesses, their envy, and their anger behind them in the grave. In the heavenly country, every companion is an everlasting friend, and all thy dear and pious kindred, who are departed, have put off every thing that once made thee or them uneasy. They are far better company above than ever they were, or could be, here on earth; and dost thou not want to see them all in their best raiment of grace and glory; and to hold sweet communion with them in the purest intercourses of love?

"But there are still sweeter allurements to a holy soul; God, even thy God, dwells in the midst of his saints on high, and that in the full glories of his love: Jesus thy Saviour, whom thou hast known, and whom thou hast loved, though thou hast never seen him; Jesus is Lord of that country, he waits for thee there; God himself dwells there as the fountain of felicity, and shall be no more absent from thee. Thou shalt no more complain of the withdrawings of the light of his countenance, or the short visits of his grace: Thou shalt sit solitary no more, nor mourn under the dark eclipses of the Sun of righteousness. It is the pleasure of that heaven thou hopest for, *to be for ever*

with thy Lord, to behold his glory, to see him as he is, and to be made like him, and wilt thou not enter in at the gate into the new Jerusalem when he calls thee, but tremble and start backward, because there is a short dark valley that lies on this side of it?

Remember, O my soul, *death is thine:* There is nothing in that dark valley shall hurt thee. Lift up thy head, arise, and shake thyself out of the dust. Let thy faith take a sweet prospect over the little hills of time, and beyond the vale of death: Look far into the invisible world, and banish all thy fears under the strong allurement of the joys that are prepared for thee; wait with pleasure for the hour of thy departure, and rejoice and triumph when the divine message shall come. While thou continuest here, *life is thine.* When thou goest hence, *death is thine: things present and things to come are thine;* and the invisible world to which thou art hastening, has everlasting joys in reserve for thee: Heaven itself is thine: Heaven is the inheritance of all the saints: The glories laid up there are waiting for thy possession: the dissolution of thy earthly tabernacle shall convey thee into the midst of them.

Awake, arise, and meet the happy moment, when thou shalt be undressed of this sinful flesh and blood: O let these defiled garments ever sit loose about thee, that they may be cast off without pain and regret: Go, my soul, at the summons of thy God and Father, and when the symptoms of dying nature shall say, *Hark, he calleth thee;* let thy faith and thy love, and thy joy answer, *Lord I come.* Go, my soul at the invitation of thy Redeemer, at the voice of thy beloved: Behold he appears, he comes! Go forth and meet him. Drop this fleshly clothing with holy delight; arise, *put on thy beautiful garments,* and shine for the *glory of the Lord is rising upon thee:* Go shine among *the spirits of the just made perfect,* thyself a spirit released from earth, and divested of all imperfection. O happy farewell to life and time! O glorious entrance into immortality!

HYMN FOR SERMON XLIII.

Death a Blessing to the Saints.

DO flesh and nature dread to die?
And timorous thoughts our minds enslave?
But grace can raise our hopes on high,
And quell the terrors of the grave.

What! Shall we run to gain the crown,
Yet grieve to think the goal so near?
Afraid to have our labours done,
And finish this important war?

Do we not dwell in clouds below,
And little know the good we love?
Why should we like this twilight so,
When 'tis all noon in worlds above?

There shall we see him face to face,
There shall we know the Great unknown,
And Jesus, with his glorious grace,
Shines in full light amidst the throne.

When we put off this fleshly load,
We're from a thousand mischiefs free,
For ever present with our God,
Where we have long'd and wish'd to be.

No more shall pride or passion rise,
Or envy fret, or malice roar,
Or sorrow mourn with down-cast eyes,
And sin defile our souls no more.

'Tis best, 'tis infinitely best,
To go where tempters cannot come,
Where saints and angels ever blest,
Dwell and enjoy their heavenly home.

O for a visit from my God,
To drive my fears of death away,
And help me thro' this darksome road,
To realms of everlasting day!

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

Edward Baines, Printer, Leeds.

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